



A Life of Blessings

The Guide to Prosperity,
Peace and Happiness

T Y Lee

Foreword by Ven. Dr. I. Indasara Thero

• BUDDHISM •

Dana ——— Practice **generosity** by helping others.

Sila ——— Cultivate **morality** by observing the Five Precepts.*

Bhavana — Acquire wisdom through **meditation**.


*The Five Precepts

- 1 To abstain from harming or killing any living beings.
- 2 To abstain from taking what is not given.
- 3 To abstain from sexual misconduct.
- 4 To abstain from lying and false speech.
- 5 To abstain from the abusive consumption of intoxicants and drugs.



A Life of Blessings

The Guide to Prosperity,
Peace and Happiness



T Y Lee

Foreword by Ven. Dr. I. Indasara Thero

Book layout and cover design by : Geelyn Lim
Qzee Creations
geelyn@qzeedesign.com

Provided it is done without any changes to the text, this book may be translated, reproduced or reprinted in whole or in part without seeking permission. However, the author would appreciate being informed by e-mail : **admin@justbegood.net**

All rights reserved
T Y Lee
Singapore
2008

ISBN 978-981-08-2663-5

ontents

Foreword	6
Preface	8
Introduction	11
The Buddha's Guide to Peace and Happiness	14
1. Basic Morality	15
2. Building and Managing Wealth	19
3. Protecting Assets and Wealth	22
4. False Friends and True Friends	26
5. Protecting Relationships	29
6. Qualities for Success	40
How to Accumulate Wealth	44
1. Material Wealth and Progress	44
2. Spiritual Wealth and Progress	47
How to Avoid Downfall	52
1. Material Downfall	52
2. Moral Downfall	53
3. Spiritual Downfall	53

A Life of Blessings	55
1. The Essential Blessings	57
2. The Supporting Blessings	60
3. The Personal Blessings	63
4. The Higher Blessings	68
5. The Supreme Blessings	72
Conclusion	82
Letters from around the World	84
Appendix	
1. Sigalovada Sutta	94
2. Vyagghapajja Sutta	113
3. Parabhava Sutta	121
4. Maha Mangala Sutta	125

“Those who only know Buddhism from a distance sometimes come to the conclusion that it is more relevant to monks and nuns living in remote forests in ancient India and that it has nothing significant to say to 21st century humanity. This small book will quickly dispel any such misinformed views. The Buddha addressed the perennial concerns of all human beings - the nature of good and bad, how to be at peace with your neighbor, the meaning of life, and most importantly, how to be a happy and fulfilled individual. The author has selected four discourses by the Buddha that deal with all these issues and has written a commentary on each of them. The result is a readable, practical and common-sense guide to living the Buddhist life.”

Venerable Shravasti Dhammika

Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society
Singapore

Author of “Good Question, Good Answer”

“Mr. T. Y. Lee in his booklet “A Life of Blessings” has chosen four very useful and practical guidelines for everyday life, which serve as a foundation for more vaunted wisdom. This is “Everyman’s Dhamma”, which stands out for its clarity and simplicity and points to the flexibility and adaptability of Buddhism in the modern era. “A Life of Blessings” highlights the practical simplicity of Buddhism as opposed to the somewhat dogmatic faith characteristic of other religions. For the spread of the Good Dhamma, I would strongly recommend this booklet for its relevance to the social problems of our time and its applicability to everyday life.”

Venerable Pannyavaro Mahathera

Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery
Australia

Founder and webmaster of BuddhaNet

F oreword

by Venerable Dr. I. Indasara Thero

One day a young person came to me and asked, “How can I live happily and achieve prosperity without facing any difficulties?” I simply told him that he should not do any deeds which lead to repentance, sadness or regret. This way of living leads to a prosperous and happy life.

Mr. T.Y. Lee in his booklet “A Life of Blessings” shows how to achieve prosperity and happiness in life according to Buddhism. He has selected a few well known suttas from the Sutta Pitaka and presents them in a straightforward and easily understood way.

Mr. Lee introduces the Sigalovada Sutta first and discusses basic morality, protecting and building assets and wealth, friendships, relationships and qualities for success. He then proceeds to the Vyagghapajja Sutta and discusses the Buddha’s teachings on how a lay person should accumulate material and spiritual wealth.

However, even a wealthy person can suffer downfall without mindful behaviour and the Buddha in the Parabhava Sutta taught us what these reasons are for downfall. Mr. Lee has presented these reasons clearly and simply by placing them under three separate headings.

He has also shed light on a new angle on the Mangala Sutta by grouping all the 38 Blessings under five headings which he has named the Essential Blessings, Supporting Blessings, Personal Blessings, Higher Blessings and Supreme Blessings.

In this booklet Mr. T.Y. Lee has shown how to gain prosperity and happiness, how to avoid material, moral and spiritual downfall and enlightens people on the blessings in life. Therefore, I highly recommend this booklet as knowledgeable material for a life of blessings in the Buddhist perspective.

Venerable Dr. I. Indasara Thero

Vice Chancellor

Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka





reface

Apart from the traditionally Buddhist countries in Asia where Buddhism remains strong, it is growing at an explosive pace in America and many European countries, and is currently the fastest growing religion in Australia. Modern and educated people are increasingly finding a need for spiritual teachings devoid of fanciful stories and myths, free from threats of punishments, and without beliefs which go against science and reason.

Simple faith and worship are no longer enough in this day and age. Buddhism with its practical and consistent teachings and its relevance to daily life, is able to satisfy intelligent and enquiring minds, and thus appeals very much to our present-day society. The Sigalovada Sutta, Vyagghapajja Sutta, Parabhava Sutta and Mangala Sutta are all very good examples of such teachings. They are sensible, readily applicable and lead to both personal improvement and growth, and spiritual progress and development. This book is based on these four suttas.

I hope to promote a greater understanding of Buddhism by presenting these essential teachings in a concise, uncomplicated and down-to-earth manner so that they can be appreciated by more people. I had thought it useful to also have these four suttas compiled into one compact book for the easy reference of all practicing Buddhists and

for the convenience of all students of Buddhism. As such, the commonly available translations by Ven. Narada Thera are also included in the Appendix.

The Buddha's teachings were originally memorized and recited rather than written down and read. But when written down, these recitations sometimes make for difficult reading. This is especially so when they originated more than 2,500 years ago in conditions very different from that of our current age, and in a language quite unlike our own.

Therefore, in line with the aim to make the teachings more accessible and easy to understand, these suttas have been presented in a modern context using contemporary language. They have also been divided into chapters, with headings, sub-sections and explanations inserted to make them easier to read. However, the flow and sequence of the texts have been retained as much as possible to preserve the feel and spirit of the Buddha's teachings.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Ven. S. Dhammika for his guidance and endless patience, Ven. Dr. I. Indasara Thero for writing the Foreword, Ven. Pannyavaro Mahathera for reviewing the booklet, and to Mr. Leong Kum Seng and Ms. Han Ah Yew for their valuable suggestions and help in checking the text. I am also extremely privileged to be able to work with Ms. Sylvia Bay on this book. My appreciation goes again to Ms. Geelyn Lim for all her hard work on the design and layout of this book. All mistakes, errors and omissions are

mine alone, and I will be happy to hear from anyone who can correct them, so that this book can be improved on.

Thanks also go to all my teachers and friends in the Dhamma for their support and encouragement from the very beginning. My gratitude goes to my parents and my wife, Susan, for all the help they have given me in my 'work' of propagating the Dhamma. Finally my special thanks to the people all over the world who have made 'Just be Good' so successful and for helping to spread the Dhamma wherever they are.

May all Beings be well and happy, and free from physical and mental suffering. May all Beings embark on the Path of the Buddha and realize Nibbana. May all the merits from this book be dedicated to the happiness and emancipation of all Beings, and to help protect and spread the Teachings of the Buddha.

T Y Lee

www.justbegood.net

Diploma in Buddhism, Sri Lanka

Bachelor of Law (Hons), UK

Master of Business Administration, USA





Introduction



Buddhism is usually seen as a highly spiritual practice, with the lofty aim of saving all sentient beings, or of attaining Nibbana. However, it is often overlooked that the Buddha also gave many valuable teachings to guide people in their everyday lives of raising their families, running their businesses and interacting with society.

One of the major factors for the rapid spread of Buddhism in ancient India was the Buddha's great skill as a teacher. He was able to perceive the moral and spiritual maturity of his listeners. For example, if he saw that his listeners were not ready to understand the Four Noble Truths or the Noble Eight-Fold Path, he would impart the more basic teachings which they would have found easier to grasp and accept.

To most ordinary folk, he would explain the benefits of generosity and morality so that if they accept and practice these teachings, they will have better lives in the present, and also be able to have favourable, or even heavenly rebirths in the future. By learning and practicing even these basic teachings, the conditions are created for them to continue on the path towards full enlightenment in their future lives.

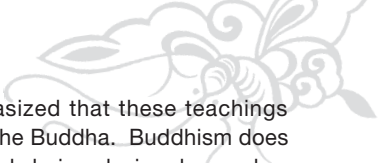
The Buddha knew that it would be pointless and unrealistic to try to explain the higher teachings to those who were

not ready. Doing so would only confuse them or even worse, turn them away from the Dhamma. Only when he saw that they were ready, would he then go on to the higher teachings.

Buddhism would have failed if the Buddha did not adapt his teachings to suit the capacity of his listeners. He was able to vary the style, content and depth of his teachings so that his listeners received the most benefit from them. This flexibility also contributed to Buddhism's survival, spread and success through the ages.

Likewise, in our current age of rapid change and often excessive materialism, many people will be more interested in teachings that can have both a positive and immediate impact on their daily lives. Therefore, the practical and down-to-earth teachings of the Buddha as presented in this book will be of great value and a good starting point for many people. And if followed, these teachings will be the stepping stones towards higher ideals and spiritual advancement and more importantly, mark the beginning of the journey in Buddhism.

The Sigalovada Sutta (Code of Ethics for Lay People), Vyagghapajja Sutta (Conditions of Welfare), Parabhava Sutta (Causes of Downfall), and the Mangala Sutta (Discourse on Blessings) are the teachings set forth in this book. They are systematic and comprehensive sets of guidelines which apply to daily life, social relationships, and even economics and politics, and lead gradually to the deeper teachings of the Buddha.




However, it should be emphasized that these teachings are not commandments from the Buddha. Buddhism does not have the concept of heavenly beings laying down rules, which if broken, lead to eternal punishment in hell. Buddhism is not based on rewards and threats, but on knowledge and understanding. Only by exploring, questioning and properly understanding the Buddha's teachings, can they be truly followed.

Blind faith and unthinking worship are not prerequisites for being a Buddhist. These are in fact negative qualities to be discouraged as they lead to dogmatism, stubbornness and inflexibility. In Buddhism, a receptive and enquiring mind is considered a worthy quality and a sign of openness and intelligence.

There is nothing mystical or even remotely mysterious in this book. The Buddha never resorted to supernatural rituals or asked for logic defying leaps of faith in any of his teachings. Everything here is rational and sensible, relevant to the present and very much down-to-earth. These teachings are not difficult, and can be practiced by anyone, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

Approach these teachings with an open mind. Make a sincere attempt to observe and practice them. The results will be immediate and beneficial, for this life and future lives to come.



The Buddha's Guide to Peace and Happiness

The Sigalovada Sutta

The Buddha's Guide to Peace and Happiness is based on the Sigalovada Sutta, one of his greatest and most valuable set of teachings. It deals with basic morality, building and preserving wealth, friendships, the reciprocal responsibilities in social relationships, and the qualities of successful persons. This teaching benefits both individuals and society as a whole too.

The sutta is named after Sigala, a young man who lived during the time of the Buddha. Sigala was headstrong, materialistic and stubborn and always had many excuses for not paying respects to the Buddha or even going to temples. The parents of this young man were devotees of the Buddha but they could not make him follow their footsteps. His father, a very wealthy man was worried that Sigala would go astray and fritter away the fortune that he stood to inherit.

After a major illness, the father called Sigala to his deathbed to convey his final wishes. He requested that Sigala worship the six directions of the East, South, West, North, the Nadir and the Zenith every morning. As this was a common religious practice in India at the time, Sigala agreed and was obedient enough to perform this ritual faithfully every morning.

As hoped for by his father, the Buddha came across Sigala one morning as he was worshipping the six directions. The Buddha then asked Sigala why he was doing this and Sigala replied that he was merely carrying out the dying wishes of his father.

The Buddha then proceeded to give a new and more meaningful explanation to this ritual. The explanation formed the basis of the discourse that we now come to know as the Sigalovada Sutta. At the end of the discourse, Sigala took refuge in the Buddha and became one of his devout followers.

1. Basic Morality

Four harmful actions to avoid

Avoid hurting and killing living beings [1]

By not hurting and killing,

This is how each individual protects others from suffering and harm,

And how the lives and safety of individuals are protected.

Avoid taking what is not given [2]

By not taking what is not given,

This is how each individual protects others from hardship and loss,

And how the possessions and livelihoods of individuals are protected.

Avoid sexual misconduct [3]

By not engaging in sexual misconduct,
This is how each individual protects other families
from misery and anguish,
And how the unity and well-being of families
are protected.

Avoid lying [4]

By not lying and using other forms of false speech,
This is how each individual protects society from
mistrust and disorder,
And how the integrity and security of societies
are protected.

Four reasons for committing these harmful actions

Desire

For example, because of desire for wrongful pleasure,
one may engage in sexual misconduct.

Anger

For example, because of anger that is not controlled,
one may hurt another.

Ignorance

For example, because of ignorance that it is wrong
to purchase stolen, counterfeit or pirated material,
one may take what is not given.

Fear

For example, because of fear of having a mistake or
a misdeed discovered, one may lie.

A virtuous person will not be led astray by desire, anger, ignorance or fear. As such, he or she will avoid these four harmful actions.



The Buddha starts by laying the foundation for basic morality which everyone, without exception, should make an effort to live by. We should not cause suffering by hurting or killing, or by stealing or telling lies, or by adultery. We do not wish suffering to come to us in these ways, and thus we should not be the cause of such suffering to others.

Anyone who habitually commits such acts will sooner or later get into trouble. This is just common sense. Avoiding these four actions, as well as avoiding the misuse of alcohol and drugs, comprise the Five Precepts which all practicing Buddhists try their best to observe.

On a broader level, each individual actually also helps to protect society by avoiding these negative actions. And by individuals collectively avoiding these actions, each individual is thus protected by society too. The Buddha therefore placed great importance on these foundations of morality, and here lies the basis of peace and happiness for both individuals and society.



Notes

- [1] All living beings include animals and not just human beings.
- [2] This includes property that someone misplaced or left behind. Where possible, an effort should be made to return such property to the rightful owner. This also includes copyrights and intellectual property where counterfeiting and piracy will cause loss to the actual owners.
- [3] This means adultery, being involved with the loved ones of others, and forcing oneself on someone unwilling.
- [4] This includes all forms of false speech and words which cause harm such as libel, slander, gossip and spreading rumours.

2. Building and Managing Wealth

Building wealth

One who is wise and morally upright
Shines like a fire on a hilltop;
He or she builds wealth patiently bit by bit
Like the way bees gather honey.
In this way riches will be steadily accumulated
Like an ant-hill that grows high.

Managing wealth

One who builds wealth in this way
Is ready for family and household.
The wealth should be divided into four parts
So that he or she will always have good friends and
a favourable life.

One part should be spent and enjoyed as the fruits
of work,
Perhaps to use a portion to help the needy and
less fortunate.
Two parts should be used to conduct or invest in
one's own business.
One part to save in case of misfortune.



Wealth should be accumulated in accordance with Right Livelihood in the Noble Eight-Fold Path. This means that occupations involving killing, the sale of animal flesh, and trading in humans, weapons, poisons and intoxicants should be avoided. Unethical, immoral and illegal forms of livelihood should also be avoided. The Buddha praised the upright and wise who observe Right Livelihood in the process of accumulating their savings and wealth.

Very interesting is the Buddha's advice that wealth should be built up patiently and gradually. How appropriate this advice is, especially in these modern times where we frequently see fortunes being made and lost very quickly in risky financial ventures, and so many people being duped and swindled of their savings by shady get-rich-quick schemes!

A person who builds up his or her assets slowly and patiently is usually more stable, and therefore more prepared in settling down and starting a family. The wealth accumulated should be divided into four parts and used as follows :

One part should be spent on ourselves and our family, with a portion for charitable purposes if desired.

Two parts should be used to maintain and grow our wealth, such as by investing in our business so that it will remain viable and continue to provide a constant and ample flow of income. In the modern context, these two parts may perhaps be used to invest in stable long-term investments.

The last part should be set aside as savings for a rainy day. Misfortune may strike at any time, and we should always be well prepared for it.

These are all particularly good reminders as we are nowadays constantly bombarded by the media fueling our greed for easy wealth, and making us crave for frivolous, expensive and ultimately useless possessions. Because of this, many people spend unwisely and get into excessive debt which results in financial difficulties. This of course will likely lead to domestic and marital problems, bankruptcy and even crime.

Thus while the Buddha's advice on managing wealth may appear simple and conservative, it can be used as a guide which if followed, will have a significant and positive impact on the financial well-being of most people, eventually leading to lasting prosperity and a happier life for self and family too.



Note

This part of the teaching appears later in the Sigalovada Sutta. It has been placed here so that the teachings on Wealth (Sections 2 and 3) are grouped together for easier reading.

3. Protecting Assets and Wealth

Six Ways of squandering wealth to avoid

Indulging in alcohol and drugs which cause loss of self-control

Overspending and immediate loss of wealth
Increased quarrelling and hostilities
Susceptibility to illness and disease
Unsavoury and bad reputation
Shameless behaviour and indecent exposure
Foolishness and weakened intellect

Roaming the streets, staying out late at night

Being vulnerable to danger
Spouse and children are exposed to risk
The home is unprotected and insecure
Being suspected of crimes
Being subject to rumours and gossip
Meeting with many troubles

Frequent partying and always looking for entertainment

Leisure and having a good time are fine in moderation. However, an individual used to frequent partying and entertainment will always be thinking in the following manner, to the detriment of family and work :

“Where’s the dancing?”

“Where’s the singing?”

“Where’s the music?”

“What’s on the movies?”

“Who’s in the shows?”

Compulsive gambling

Winners are resented and even hated

Losers grieve over losses and regret their actions

Savings, hard earned wealth and inheritances are lost

One's word is considered less reliable in public or in court

One is held in disdain and contempt by friends and relatives

One is not sought after as a marriage partner

Associating with bad company

Befriending and associating with rogues

Befriending and associating with drunkards

Befriending and associating with drug addicts

Befriending and associating with cheats and swindlers

Befriending and associating with thugs and ruffians

Being idle and lazy

Having lots of excuses for not working :

It is too cold

It is too hot

It is too late

It is too early

Being too hungry

Being too full

Duties and responsibilities are neglected. One is unable to accumulate wealth, and is incapable of supporting self and family. Any fortune and savings will soon dwindle away.



Most of these points are self-explanatory but a special mention should be made about intoxicants. The Buddha advised very strongly against such substances many times in this discourse and in other important teachings too. This is especially relevant nowadays as we see so many people, rich and poor, famous and obscure, causing themselves and others such enormous harm by abusing alcohol and illegal drugs.

Furthermore, frequent and excessive drinking is usually accompanied by a host of other expensive, and usually immoral and unhealthy activities which lead to many other personal, health and financial problems. Also, drink-driving and drug trafficking are these days, among society's most dangerous and destructive crimes.

These are the six sure ways of losing our wealth and savings. Engaging in these activities will have many other harmful consequences for both the individual and society too. A rational person would surely wish to protect what he or she has worked so hard to build up. Financial stability will be assured by simply avoiding these six activities. Peace and happiness will follow, and so too will prosperity.



In summary :

Although there may be many 'good-time' friends, and people who outwardly proclaim their friendship, a true friend is one who remains close-by in times of hardship.

One will be ruined by these six things : sleeping late, adultery, hatred, aimlessness, harmful friends, extreme stinginess.

One will suffer not only in this life, but also in the next, if he or she has evil friends and companions, and spends time doing evil.

One will be destroyed if he or she indulges in the following six things : gambling and promiscuity, drinking and being obsessed with singing and dancing, sleeping by day, aimless wandering at unseemly hours, keeping harmful friends, utter stinginess.

One who takes delight in gambling, drinking, adultery, associating with low-life and avoiding the wise, will surely go to waste.

One who goes from place to place drinking and becoming a drunkard will sink quickly into debt, become poor, homeless, and bring disrepute to his or her family.

One cannot maintain a proper home life and family by always sleeping till late, rising when it is night, and always being intoxicated.

One who continually gives excuses not to work and leaves things undone, will miss out on opportunities to do well.

One who is not greatly affected by difficulties in work, who does not look for excuses to avoid work, who fulfills his or her responsibilities, will always enjoy happiness.

4. False Friends and True Friends

False friends

Those who take

They take whatever they can get
They give little but ask for much
They do what is required only out of obligation
They are friends for their own advantage

Those who pay lip-service

They claim to have been good friends in the past
They promise to be good friends in the future
They try to gain favour with kind but empty words
When called upon, they say they are unable to help

Those who flatter

They approve of wrong-doing
They approve or disapprove of doing right, whichever will benefit them
They speak well of you in your presence
They speak ill of you to others when you are not around

Those who bring ruin

They are companions for indulging in drinking
They are companions for being out late at night for no good reason
They are companions for excessively frequenting places of entertainment
They are companions for indulging in gambling

In summary :

The friends who take
The friends who pay lip-service
The friends who flatter
The friends who brings ruin.

The wise will know that these four
Are not friends but are enemies;
And should be avoided
As one avoids a dangerous path.

True friends

Those who are helpmates

They protect you when you are vulnerable
They protect your possessions when you
are vulnerable
They are there when you are troubled
They provide generously when there is a need

Those who remain the same in good times and in bad

They trust you with their secrets
They can be trusted with your secrets
They do not abandon you in times of trouble
They may even give their life for you

Those who give good counsel

They restrain you from doing wrong
They encourage you to do what is right
They keep you informed of what you should know
They show the right way and are companions for
spiritual practice

Those who are compassionate

They sympathize in your misfortune

They rejoice in your good fortune

They restrain others from speaking ill of you

They commend those who speak well of you

In summary :

The friends who help

The friends who stay in good times and in bad

The friends who give good counsel

The friends who are compassionate.

The wise will know that these four

Are truly friends;

And treasure them

As a mother does her own child.



To the Buddha, friendship is the single most important factor determining the direction of a person's life. The right kind of friends can help even the most wayward person to change for the better, whereas the wrong kind of friends can bring down even the most upright person. Good friends, especially spiritual friends, can lead each other to the greatest heights.

The Buddha pointed out that we become like those we befriend, and if we unmindfully associate with false friends, our decline can come about very rapidly indeed. Bad company should be avoided, unless we are there in times of need or to help them improve themselves. True friends are rare and should thus be treasured.



5. Protecting Relationships

Six types of relationships to protect – The Six Directions

As we begin our lives, we are children brought up at home.

The East represents children and parents.

As youths, the next stage of our life is spent in school.

The South represents students and teachers.

As young adults, starting a family follows.

The West represents husbands and wives.

As grown-ups, we have our social lives.

The North represents friends and associates.

As breadwinners, we have our businesses and work.

The Nadir represents employers and employees.

As we mature in our lives, we seek higher goals.

The Zenith represents lay persons and spiritual teachers.



The Buddha graphically and very imaginatively depicted the various sets of relationships in society as the 'Six

Directions' that should be protected. Each direction represents a different social relationship where each party has reciprocal responsibilities towards the other.

Using the further symbolism of the four main cardinal directions, each one signifies a different stage that everyone goes through in life, from a child to an adult. In addition, the Nadir or the downward direction, represents the down-to-earth reality of earning a living, and the Zenith or the upward direction, represents the higher spiritual life.

In Buddhism, relationships should be reciprocal and not one-sided. A spirit of generosity and considerate behaviour are necessary. Thus, by each person helping and being considerate to others, everyone in-turn benefits from this positive conduct. In this way, all relationships in society are protected and the well-being of the community assured.



Protecting the East – Children and Parents

How children should treat their parents

By supporting their parents when necessary [1]

By helping them in their business, at work, or in any other appropriate ways

By keeping the family together

By being worthy of their inheritance [2]

By doing charitable acts in memory of departed parents and relatives

How parents should treat their children

- By restraining their children from doing wrong
- By encouraging them to do what is right [3]
- By having them trained in a profession [4]
- By helping or giving advice in the choice of a suitable marriage partner
- By handing over their inheritance at a proper time [5]

When children and parents treat each other in this way, the East is protected and the family made peaceful and secure.

Protecting the South – Students and Teachers

How students should treat their teachers

- By showing their teachers proper respect
- By attending to their needs
- By personal service to them
- By being eager to learn
- By paying careful attention when being taught

How teachers should treat their students

- By training their students to develop self-discipline
- By teaching them so that they understand the lessons well
- By giving them a well-balanced education
- By introducing them to friends and colleagues [6]
- By helping to ensure their safety and well-being

When students and teachers treat each other in this way, the South is protected and places of learning made peaceful and secure.

Protecting the West – Husbands and Wives

How a husband should treat his wife

By treating her with courtesy

By showing her respect [7]

By being faithful to her

By sharing authority of the household with her

By providing her with jewellery and gifts [8]

How a wife should treat her husband

By properly organizing the household

By being hospitable to in-laws, and treating household workers well [9]

By being faithful to him

By helping to preserve the family wealth [10]

By being skilful and diligent in her duties

When husbands and wives treat each other in this way, the West is protected and households made peaceful and secure.

Protecting the North – Friends and Associates

How one should treat friends and associates

By being generous and willing to share

By speaking with kind words

- By being helpful
- By being impartial and unbiased
- By being sincere and honest

How friends and associates should treat each other

- By taking care of each other when they are vulnerable
- By protecting their property when they are vulnerable
- By being a refuge in times of fear or danger
- By not abandoning them in times of need
- By respecting and showing consideration for their family

When friends and associates treat each other in this way, the North is protected and society made peaceful and secure.

Protecting the Nadir – Employers and Employees

How employers should treat their employees

- By assigning their employees work according to their abilities
- By paying them adequately for their work
- By looking after their medical needs
- By giving them special treats [11]
- By allowing them leave and holidays [12]

How employees should treat their employers

- By arriving early for work
- By staying late when necessary

By taking only what is given
By doing their job well
By upholding and spreading the good reputation of their employer

When employees and employers treat each other in this way, the Nadir is protected and places of work made peaceful and secure.

Protecting the Zenith – Spiritual teachers and Lay followers

How lay followers should treat their spiritual teachers

By kind actions
By kind speech
By kind thoughts [13]
By keeping their house open to them
By providing them with material needs [14]

How spiritual teachers should treat their lay followers

By restraining them from doing wrong
By encouraging them to do what is right
By showing them compassion
By teaching them what they do not know
By clarifying what has been taught
By showing them the way and guiding them in spiritual practice [15]

When spiritual teachers and lay followers treat each other in this way, the Zenith is protected and spiritual places made peaceful and secure.

Parents are the East,
Teachers are the South,
Spouses are the West,
Friends and associates are the North.

Workers and employees are the Nadir,
Spiritual teachers are the Zenith.
These are the directions to be honoured
By one who would be fit to lead a good life.



Notes

[1] This is the most basic duty of children toward their parents. To show gratitude for all the difficulties and expenses in bringing them up, they must provide for their parents when it is necessary, and take care of them in their old age. According to the Buddha, the only way we can truly repay our parents is to teach and get them to practice the Dhamma.

[2] This would mean good behaviour, loyalty, and children doing the best they can for the sake of their parents who have worked so hard to provide them with their inheritance, whether it is large or small.

[3] Parents are the first teachers their children have and should actively guide them to not only avoid bad deeds, but also to encourage them to do good deeds. There is no better way for parents to do this than by being good examples and role models for their children.

[4] In the modern context, this duty means that parents should provide their children with at least a basic education. For Buddhist parents, this should include some education in the Dhamma too. Nowadays, many Buddhist parents overlook or ignore this responsibility, usually because they themselves do not have much knowledge in this area. However, all Buddhist parents should not neglect this crucial duty of setting their children as early as possible on the right path.

[5] This has practical and very serious implications especially today. Many people are not adequately prepared for death and leave ambiguous wills, or even no wills at all. This frequently results in the surviving family members fighting each other with much hatred and animosity over the estate of the deceased. Parents should try to allocate as much of the inheritance as they can to their children while they are still alive, to prevent such disputes arising and ensure a smooth transition and handing over.

[6] This would mean that teachers should help their students by putting them in touch with their own connections. By doing so their students will get to know the right people when furthering their studies, or when looking for jobs.

The Buddha, more than 2,500 years ago, already saw the importance of social networking!

[7] In a culture where males were very dominant and females usually treated as second-class citizens or worse, the Buddha advocated a change in mindset and attitudes towards women, promoting equality between partners. It was good advice then, as it is now, that husbands should always treat their wives with courtesy and respect to maintain a loving and enduring relationship.

[8] In ancient India, before there were any banks, people usually put their savings and wealth into jewellery. This jewellery was worn on the person and were often the only form of savings a wife had if her husband were to pass away. Nowadays, this would mean that husbands should have sufficient insurance coverage for their wives and children in case of unexpected serious illness or death. Apart from this very practical reason, all wives enjoy some jewellery and gifts from their husbands from time to time.

[9] Household workers include domestic maids. How significant this advice is nowadays, as we can see so many housewives being hauled to court for ill-treating their maids, resulting in shame and difficulties for their own families.

[10] Wives have a duty towards their husbands not to over-spend or waste hard earned money. They should

spend wisely and help to save whenever possible so as to preserve the family's wealth. Again, this is another example of the Buddha's practical and timeless advice, relevant in his time as it is in ours.

[11] This may be taken nowadays to mean that employers should share their profits and success by giving out rewards and bonuses to employees when their businesses are doing well. This builds up employee loyalty and is an incentive for them to continue their hard work, for the long-term good of their employers.

[12] It is truly amazing for the Buddha to have included these points here as they were made more than 2,500 years ago when slavery was common, workers exploited and there were no such things as minimum wages or basic working conditions. Only in the last century did trade unions obtain such rights for workers.

[13] This should not be taken to mean that kind actions, speech and thoughts should be practiced only towards spiritual teachers. By performing these wholesome deeds towards all beings, lay followers are in fact repaying their teachers' efforts by putting what has been learnt into practice, for their own benefit and that of others too.

[14] This may be taken to mean that lay followers should extend their support to all virtuous spiritual teachers in general, and not have excessive devotion towards just one

particular spiritual teacher or monk. If the teacher is upright and imparts good teachings, then all is well. However, the danger of being led astray arises if such partiality blinds one to improper or inaccurate teachings. Also, if anything were to happen to that favourite teacher or monk, then the lay follower with such undue devotion may fall away from valuable and necessary spiritual guidance.

[15] In a Buddhist context, this would mean the practice of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, meditation, and other higher spiritual teachings and practices.

6. Qualities for Success

Qualities of successful individuals

Wise and virtuous,
Gentle and eloquent,
Humble and amenable,
Such a person will attain success.

Energetic and not lazy,
Unshaken by troubles,
Of good conduct and intelligent,
Such a person will attain success.

Approachable and friendly,
Kind with words and unselfish,
A teacher, guide and leader,
Such a person will attain success.



Qualities regarding the character of an individual come first and morality is the foundation on which everything else rests upon. Thus one has to be wise and virtuous to have true and long-lasting success. This means that one must not only be able to distinguish right from wrong, but to actually do what is right and avoid what is wrong. One should also be gentle and not harsh, not hurt others with words, and be humble and agreeable.

Next, come the essential qualities required for a successful working life. In earning a living or in business, no other quality can replace the readiness for hard work. Remaining steadfast despite trouble or problems, and maintaining one's integrity in times of difficulties are also vital elements. Being polite and well-mannered and keen to improve by learning new skills or methods are the other necessary qualities for success in business or at work.

Finally, the individual should be open and friendly, and not aloof or proud. He or she should speak kindly, lead by good example, and be willing to share knowledge and experience with others. To lead others along the same path of accomplishment will bring complete and absolute success to any individual.



Qualities of successful leaders

Generosity, pleasant speech,
Being helpful to others,
Treating all with fairness,
At every place and as each case demands.

These four winning ways hold the world together,
Like the lynchpin of a moving carriage.
If these winning ways do not exist,
Then no mothers or fathers will receive
Honour or respect from their children.

The wise reflect rightly on these four winning ways. They therefore attain greatness and the praise they so deserve.



For any society to be successful, it needs to have leaders with positive qualities. These leaders, whether in government or business, should be generous by nature and free from excessive greed. If not, they may succumb to corruption, embezzle the community's resources and steal from the public or from their own companies. Corruption, if unchecked, will definitely lead to the downward spiral of any society and eventually result in great hardship for the entire community.

Good leaders must be unselfish, compassionate and willing to use the community's wealth and resources to help the needy and assist the underprivileged to improve themselves. In this way, society will develop and progress to higher levels.

Leaders must be skilful in their use of speech and certainly not demean or humiliate anyone as this will breed hatred, resentment and disharmony. Leaders must never abuse their positions, and must observe the rule of law in all circumstances. Finally, they must emphasize fairness and equality for all, regardless of wealth, religion, race or status.



In short, leaders in society should be generous, pleasant, helpful and impartial, with a desire to see everyone enjoy happiness and prosperity. These qualities hold society together, without which, it will deteriorate and decline. If they do not have any of these qualities, society's leaders will not have the respect of the younger generation.

Leaders who realize the importance of these qualities and practice them, will thus attain greatness, fame and praise, for they lead their society to stability, prosperity and success.




References



- An Approach to Buddhist Social Philosophy – Ven. P. Gnanarama
A Constitution for Living – Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto
Buddhism for Every Man – W.G. Weeraratne
Moral and Ethical Conduct of a Buddhist – Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda
Sigalovada Sutta – Ven. P. Pameratana
Sigalovada Sutta – Piya Tan
Sigalovada Sutta – Narada Thera
Sigalovada Sutta – John Kelly, Sue Sawyer, and Victoria Yareham
The Charter of an Ideal Society – Ven. P. Gnanarama
The Sigalovada in Pictures – Ven. K. Dhammasiri
The Way to Social Harmony – Ven. U Pynnyathiha





How to Accumulate Wealth

The Vyagghapajja Sutta

How to Accumulate Wealth is based on the Vyagghapajja Sutta, also known as the Dighajanu Sutta. It describes the conditions that improve the welfare of lay people.

In this sutta, the Buddha was approached by a lay person called Dighajanu who asked for his advice. Dighajanu said that as an ordinary person with a wife and children, he and his family enjoy worldly pleasures such as fine clothing, fragrant scents, and expensive gold and silver jewellery. He asked the Buddha to teach him how he could ensure his continued prosperity and happiness in this life, and in his future lives too.

The Buddha then proceeded to give this discourse to Dighajanu and in doing so, used the simile of a great water tank collecting rainfall. He showed how wealth, both material and spiritual, can be similarly accumulated by anyone with the right qualities.

1. Material Wealth and Progress

Four qualities that create material wealth and progress

Persistent effort

By whatever means one engages in to earn a living,

he or she should be hardworking and not lazy. He or she should understand what needs to be done, learn how to do it properly, do it well, and also delegate work to others where appropriate.

Proper vigilance

Any wealth that has been legally and rightfully accumulated should be looked after properly. Assets should be protected from fraud or misappropriation and be well managed to avoid unnecessary taxation or improper confiscation by the state. Possessions should be well protected from being stolen or destroyed. Property should not be allowed to be squandered away by irresponsible family members.

Good company

One should associate with the right kind of friends. It does not matter whether they are young or old as long as they are virtuous, charitable and have wisdom and spirituality. In this way, he or she will be positively influenced and thus live in the right way.

Balanced livelihood

One should be aware of one's income and expenses and live within one's means. One should be neither extravagant nor miserly, and ensure that one's income will be more than one's expenses and not the other way round. Anyone who lives beyond their means will have many problems and soon go to ruin. At the other extreme, a miser who hoards his or her wealth will live an unhappy life and come to a wretched end.

Four factors leading to the loss of material wealth and progress

Debauchery and promiscuity

Frequent drinking and intoxication

Addiction to gambling

Associating with bad company

Four factors leading to the gain of material wealth and progress

Abstinence from debauchery and promiscuity

Abstinence from drinking and intoxication

Abstinence from gambling

Associating with good company

Imagine a great water tank with four inlets and four outlets. The four inlets are the four factors leading to gain, and the four outlets are the four factors leading to loss.

If the inlets are kept open and the outlets kept closed, the water supply will not decrease, even if there is no rain.

For the same great water tank, if the inlets are kept open and the outlets kept closed, if there is rain the water supply will surely increase.

Therefore, always avoid the four factors of loss, and always abide by the four factors of gain.

2. Spiritual Wealth and Progress

Four qualities that ensure happiness and well-being in future lives

Faith

This is faith in the Buddha and his teachings. This is not blind faith, but confident faith based on knowledge and understanding.

Virtue

This is abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxicants which cause loss of self-control.

Generosity

This is freedom from avarice, being charitable and helpful. It is happiness in assisting the needy and delight in the distribution of donations and alms.

Wisdom

This is realization of the impermanent nature of existence, that whatever arises will eventually cease. It is the understanding that leads to enduring peace and happiness.

In summary :

Hardworking and being careful at one's work,
Managing properly one's wealth,
Living a balanced life,
Protecting what one has built up.

With spiritual confidence and steeped in virtue,
Generous and free from greed,
One always strives to clear the way to happiness for
future lives.

To the person with spiritual confidence,
These are the eight qualities taught by the Buddha,
Which lead to happiness in this and future lives,
And result in the increase of generosity and merit.



Material wealth and progress

It all comes down to doing a job, and doing it well. There are no magic formulae, prayers, rituals or talismans that bring wealth, and the Buddha never said that faith in him will lead to any kind of material rewards. Hard, careful and intelligent work are the main qualities for success.

The other qualities necessary for success are important supporting factors. For example, taking proper care of, and preserving what one has already acquired is essential

in building up material wealth. What has been so painstakingly accumulated should not be lost so easily.

The other crucial factor is our friendships. We are reminded time again of this by the Buddha. Being with the wrong, or immoral kinds of friends and associates can lead to ruin as they may encourage excessive drinking, gambling, promiscuity, dishonesty, and other vices. There will be virtually no chance of accumulating any lasting or significant wealth if we frequently and unmindfully socialize with the wrong kind of people.

A less obvious danger are the kind of friends in our materialistic society who create an atmosphere of greed and pressure to acquire more and more wealth and possessions. While this may not necessarily be a bad thing if such wealth is used wisely, the danger is that one may succumb to the endless pursuit of consumption and materialism and thus neglect any kind of spiritual development whatsoever. Even more dangerous is the pressure to keep up with extravagant living when any means are used to maintain such a lifestyle, whether unethical, illegal or even criminal.

The last supporting factor is just plain common-sense, which is to live within one's means. This is harder than it sounds in a society where conspicuous consumerism is accepted and even frequently encouraged. It also does not help when financial institutions routinely offer numerous forms of easy debt to get people trapped in such spendthrift

lifestyles. We should always try to remind ourselves that what really matters is not the brand of the material objects we own, but the type of inner qualities that we possess.

Promiscuity, gambling, excessive eating and drinking seem to be very much an accepted feature of society today. Again, having the right friends will help us to stay clear of these unwholesome activities, and much self-discipline is also needed to avoid all these pitfalls.

Spiritual wealth and progress

However, even if one succeeds in keeping the 'inlets open' and the 'outlets closed', thereby successfully creating material wealth, one must not neglect building up a store of spiritual wealth too. Without spiritual growth and maturity, greed and endless craving will eventually result in unhappiness and suffering.

A successful person should overcome the temptation of creating more and more material wealth simply for its own sake. One should also look towards using one's material wealth in wholesome ways such as helping the needy and underprivileged, or even to assist in the spread of the Dhamma. This is a way of repaying, or showing gratitude to society as it can be said that society had also contributed to one's wealth.

One who does not progress either materially or spiritually is like a person blind in both eyes. One who progresses

materially is like a person with one good eye. And the one who progresses both materially and spiritually is like a person with two good eyes.

**The truly wise will use their material wealth
to increase their spiritual wealth.**

**We can take only our spiritual wealth, or kamma,
with us to our next and future lives.**



References

Dighajanu Sutta – Piya Tan

Dighajanu Sutta – Thanissaro Bikkhu

Factors Leading to Welfare – Tormod Kinnes

The Longshanks Sutta – Richard Blumberg

The Wholesome Property – Aggamahapandita Bhaddanta

U Pannya Vamsa

Vyagghapajja Sutta – Narada Thera





How to Avoid Downfall

The Parabhava Sutta

How to Avoid Downfall is based on the Parabhava Sutta. It is a short teaching outlining the pitfalls to avoid in order for one to make progress along the material, moral and spiritual paths.

1. Material Downfall

One who is fond of sleep and of excessive socializing. He or she is apathetic, lazy, irritable and rude.

One who is promiscuous, a drunkard, a gambler. He or she squanders what is earned.

One who is past his or her youth and is old, but takes a very young spouse, and is continually suspicious and jealous. Work becomes poor and business neglected.

One who gives authority over his or her affairs to someone addicted to drinking and overspending.

One who is born into a good family but is not well off, and yet has excessive ambition, greed and lust for power.

2. Moral Downfall

One who is well-to-do but does not support his or her aged parents who are past their prime.

One who is prosperous with much property, jewellery and food, but does not share any of his or her wealth with others.

One who is proud of his or her birth, wealth and status, but despises his or her own relatives.

One who is not content with his or her own spouse and is involved with prostitutes and the partners of others.

3. Spiritual Downfall

One who loves the Dhamma (or any other virtuous spiritual teachings) prospers, whereas the person who is averse to it declines.

One who favours the vicious and avoids the virtuous.
One who prefers wickedness over goodness.

One who deceives virtuous people and spiritual teachers with lies.



Each of the twelve causes of downfall shuts a person off from the path of material and spiritual progress, and will eventually lead to unhappiness and suffering.

All the causes of downfall are also recipes for financial disaster. A wealthy person who will not even support his or her own aged parents is definitely a moral bankrupt. And the person who shuns virtuous spiritual teachings will never enjoy true and lasting peace and happiness.

But for those who are aware of these dangers and lead their lives accordingly, the higher path towards a richer, more gracious and noble life is open to them.



References

Causes of Downfall Abound – Tormod Kinnes

Parabhava Sutta – Narada Thera

Parabhava Sutta – Piyadassi Thera

The Wholesome Property – Aggamahapandita Bhaddanta

U Pannya Vamsa





A Life of Blessings

The Mangala Sutta

A Life of Blessings is based on the Mangala Sutta, or Discourse on Blessings, one of the most important and well-known teachings in Buddhism. In this sutta, the Buddha described what the highest blessings in life are, and the way of progress to eventually attain the ultimate blessing of lasting peace and happiness.

The Buddha was asked what is the best or most auspicious omen that can be encountered by someone at the start of the day. Omens in ancient India were believed to foretell good luck and fortune for the coming day. These omens included seeing certain sights, hearing certain names mentioned, and encountering certain smells or tastes.

The Buddha did not reply directly to the question but used it to deliver one of his most exquisite and comprehensive teachings. In his answer, he did not say what the best omens are, but instead explained what the true blessings in life are, and how we can obtain these blessings for ourselves.

Thus instead of looking out for superstitious signs or portents in the hope of getting luck and fortune, the Buddha said that we can create our own good fortune or blessings. It is therefore clear that we each can choose the direction in life we wish to take, and control our own destinies.

We can thus obtain all the blessings we want to receive through our own efforts and without depending on any external factors such as omens, gods, prayers or rituals. And we should look to acquire not just the shallow and changeable blessings of luck and fortune, but the blessings which are of genuine and lasting importance.

In the Mangala Sutta, the Buddha said that there are 38 highest blessings in life. The reason why there are so many different 'highest blessings' is because what may be the 'highest blessing' for one, may not be so for another. A person at a particular stage in life has a 'highest blessing' appropriate for his or her own individual stage of development. Therefore as a person grows, so also does the 'highest blessing' change, and working towards further 'highest blessings' leads to more progress along the path.

The 38 blessings can be categorized into five different groups: the Essential Blessings, Supporting Blessings, Personal Blessings, Higher Blessings and Supreme Blessings. Each group reflects the personal and spiritual evolution of each individual, and the qualities needed for further progress.

This teaching is thus a very detailed guide for individual development. It is set out in a logical and well structured sequence such that each group of blessings helps to lay the foundations for further blessings. It includes the most basic blessings, or qualities, each person should have, and leads gradually to the higher qualities required to attain

the ultimate blessing of Nibbana. This is the main purpose and objective of the Mangala Sutta.

1. The Essential Blessings

1. To avoid the company of fools
2. To associate with the wise
3. To honour those who are worthy of honour
4. To live in a suitable place
5. To have done good deeds in the past
6. To be on the right path



The Essential Blessings consists of the most basic and fundamental qualities that everyone should have. The elements of this group must be established to obtain both worldly and spiritual progress.

1. To avoid the company of fools

Fools are people who are unable to tell right from wrong, and as a result cause harm to others through their actions. They are not concerned with basic morality as they do not care very much about the consequences of their actions. By associating unmindfully with such people, it will be difficult to make any kind of material or spiritual progress as there is always the tendency to behave in a similar manner. Furthermore, there will be hardly any desire or motivation to do good deeds or improve oneself.

However, we must be prepared to lend assistance if it is needed and also help others to improve themselves. Thus we should not totally avoid the fools. What is important is that we remain mindful at all times and never allow ourselves to be adversely influenced by them. This blessing is right at the top of the Buddha's list and is clearly the single most important blessing for any individual to have, because without this blessing there will be none to follow.

2. To associate with the wise

The wise are those who have acquired the wisdom to tell right from wrong and thus avoid causing harm to others. They are aware that their actions have consequences on not only their present life, but in their future lives too. They discourage wrong-doing and encourage doing good deeds. We should always try to associate with such upright and virtuous people as proper friendships are of absolute importance in our lives, no matter what stage of progress we have reached.

3. To respect those who are worthy of respect

Our parents, elders and teachers are the people we should honour and respect. We can respect them materially or through our conduct. By giving them due respect and honour, we can benefit from their guidance and continue to learn from them.

4. To live in a suitable place

A suitable place has both a material and spiritual meaning. Materially, it means a peaceful place where life and property

are reasonably secure. Spiritually, it means a place and time where the teachings of the Buddha are known, and where one is able to learn and practice the teachings in peace. The blessing of living in a suitable place allows for both material and spiritual progress.

5. To have done good deeds in the past

We are continually reaping the results of our past actions. For example, if we had helped many people in the past, it is likely that when we require help ourselves, we will have the aid of some of the people whom we had previously helped. In the same way, if we continue to help others now, it is likely that in the future we will have the assistance of someone we had just helped. Thus, we must continue doing good deeds for the future. It is a twin blessing to have done good deeds in the past, and to be able to continue to do good deeds for the future.

6. To be on the right path

Most people do not even know that they are on the wrong path, much less being aware of the right path that they should take. The wrong path is that of immorality, greed and ignorance. The right path is that of virtue, generosity and wisdom. It is thus a great blessing to know the right path, and to set oneself on this path of material and spiritual progress.

2. The Supporting Blessings

7. To have a good education
8. To be proficient at work
9. To follow a code of discipline
10. To practice pleasant speech
11. To support our parents
12. To take care of our spouse and children
13. To have occupations which do not cause harm



This group of blessings relate to our preparations for adult and family life and are the factors necessary for a successful, balanced and wholesome material life. Having these Supporting Blessings allows for further progress towards higher ideals.

7. To have a good education

This refers to both a general as well as a moral education. A good general education is essential for our material welfare and a good moral education, such as learning the Buddha's teachings, is important for our spiritual welfare.

8. To be proficient at work

We must be able to support ourselves and our family and in order to do so, we have to be able to earn a decent living. We must have the necessary skills and qualifications and apply them properly to our work. Being able to earn

a proper living, and not having to struggle to survive or resort to dishonesty or crime, is essential for both material and spiritual advancement.

9. To follow a code of discipline

Observing the Five Precepts strengthens our resolve and ability to avoid immoral and harmful actions. Following such a code of discipline will keep us from the trouble and difficulties that such negative actions eventually bring.

The Five Precepts

1. To abstain from killing any living beings.
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from lying and false speech.
5. To abstain from the abusive consumption of intoxicants and drugs.

10. To practice pleasant speech

Speech is our main form of interaction with others in society. If we were to always lie, gossip, scold or speak ill of others, we will have many enemies and people will dislike and distrust us. This will hinder greatly the material and spiritual progress we hope to achieve. We should thus always speak what is true, meaningful, pleasant and beneficial for the good of ourselves and others too.

11. To support our parents

Our parents brought us into this world and cared for us from birth. It is only the most heartless and uncaring

individuals who will not help their own parents. We must show gratitude by supporting them materially and physically when it is required, and by always returning their love and care. The Buddha said that the only way we can ever fully repay our parents is to share and instil them in the Dhamma.

12. To take care of our spouse and children

Although this seems obvious enough, there are people who do not fulfil this basic duty towards their families. We must support and remain faithful to our spouse, and provide for our children with material needs, parental support and a good education. This would include the crucial duty of teaching them the Dhamma for their own long-lasting peace and happiness. Taking proper care of our family means that we have a household with peace and harmony and is another important factor necessary for spiritual development.

13. To have occupations which do not cause harm

According to the Noble Eightfold Path, we should avoid occupations that involve killing, the sale of animal flesh, the trading of humans, weapons, poisons and intoxicants. Occupations which are unethical, immoral and illegal should also be avoided. Engaging in any work which causes harm to others will never allow anyone the true peace of mind essential for spiritual development. It is thus a great blessing if we can earn a living by means which are free from unwholesome activities.

3. The Personal Blessings

14. To be charitable
15. To practice virtuous conduct
16. To be of help to relatives and friends
17. To do social services
18. To abstain from evil
19. To have no desire for evil
20. To refrain from intoxicants
21. To be diligent in wholesome practice



The elements of this group reveal the steps for further personal development which should be taken when we have established ourselves in family and work. Once we have attained these Personal Blessings, the transition towards higher spiritual ideals becomes very smooth.

14. To be charitable

Greed, craving and excessive attachment are causes of misery and suffering. By practicing charity, we weaken these negative traits and instead cultivate compassion, generosity and selflessness. We can help others materially through our efforts or donations, or spiritually by sharing the Dhamma. Charity should be practiced without regret, discrimination or ulterior motives. Genuine kindness to others brings much love and goodwill for ourselves and also for our family. It is a great blessing to be in the

fortunate position of being able to help others. And by doing so we ensure ourselves of more blessings in the future too.

15. To practice virtuous conduct

Instead of just following a code of discipline and avoiding negative actions, we can go on to a higher level of practice. A good way of doing this is to observe the positive aspects of the Five Precepts. This will lead to even greater spiritual progress.

The Five Positive Precepts

1. The practice of harmlessness and compassion.
2. The practice of kindness and generosity.
3. The practice of faithfulness and responsibility.
4. The practice of truthfulness and pleasant speech.
5. The practice of self-control and mindfulness.

16. To be of help to relatives and friends

Beyond providing for our immediate family, we should also help our relatives and friends if they are in need. As we provide assistance to one another when the need arises, we create goodwill among the people around us, and this further supports our spiritual progress.

17. To do social services

An even higher expression of generosity would be to assist the community in general. This can be done by helping to build, or making donations towards the building of schools, hospitals, shelters, roads, etc. which are of benefit

to everyone. Even the planting of gardens and trees can improve our environment and the ecology of our planet. Just as important is extending our help to the needy, sick and old. If we have the inclination and the means for any kind of social services, we are indeed blessed as we have already developed much generosity and compassion.

18. To abstain from evil

Evil in the Buddhist context means any act which harms ourselves, others, or both. We should always abstain from all such negative actions.

The Ten Unwholesome Actions

The three bodily actions of :

1. Killing
2. Stealing
3. Sexual misconduct

The four verbal actions of :

4. Lying
5. Slandering
6. Harsh speech
7. Gossip

The three mental actions of :

8. Covetousness
9. Ill-will
10. Wrong view (eg. not accepting kamma and rebirth)

19. To have no desire for evil

When we have become firm in observing the Five Precepts

and abstaining from the Ten Unwholesome Actions, we will find that we no longer have the desire to commit any of these harmful actions. We begin to truly realize that as we ourselves do not wish to be victims of such harmful actions, we should thus avoid doing such actions to others. It is a great blessing to naturally shy away from doing any harm to others.

20. To refrain from intoxicants

The Buddha emphasized this point in many teachings, and as one of the Five Precepts, it is the one that 'protects' the other four Precepts. He strongly advised against taking intoxicants because once we come under their influence, we become capable of committing any harmful acts that we would otherwise not have done. It would be a great waste to have come this far in our personal development only to have it all go to ruin because of drinking or drugs. Avoiding intoxicants is another great blessing.

21. To be diligent in wholesome practice

We have understood and now follow what is required for our personal development. The next step is to consolidate our practice and not let it deteriorate because of carelessness, or slip away because of complacency. We should continue to be mindful of keeping up and enhancing our wholesome practices even more. By practicing the Ten Wholesome Actions, we will then find it much easier to go on to the Higher Blessings.

The Ten Wholesome Actions

The three bodily actions of :

1. Compassion
2. Generosity
3. Self-control

The four verbal actions of :

4. Truthful speech
5. Kind speech
6. Pleasant speech
7. Meaningful speech

The three mental actions of :

8. Sympathetic joy
9. Loving-kindness
10. Right view

4. The Higher Blessings

- 22. To have reverence
- 23. To be humble
- 24. To be content
- 25. To be grateful
- 26. To hear the Dhamma at the right time
- 27. To have patience
- 28. To listen to advice
- 29. To associate with monks and spiritual teachers
- 30. To discuss and talk about the Dhamma



The focus in life should now be away from the mundane and material. Spiritual ideals have become more important. The Higher Blessings are the final stages of preparation for embarking on the Path to Nibbana.

22. To have reverence

We can show reverence to the Triple Gem of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha by reflecting on their sublime qualities. Having reverence for elders, monks and spiritual teachers allows for our continued learning and guidance. We can show our reverence by respectful behaviour and careful attendance to them. In addition, showing reverence to the Buddha helps to put us in a good state of mind to learn and practice the Dhamma. Practicing reverence also increases our humility and gratitude.

23. To be humble

Some who have succeeded in making good progress may start to believe that they already know everything and are better than everyone else. If this happens, it becomes difficult to maintain the right attitude and an open mind to learn from others and accept deeper teachings. Here the Buddha reminds us that pride and conceit are two of the biggest obstacles to sustained spiritual development. It is therefore a great blessing to always remain humble.

24. To be content

Different people have different requirements in life and being content does not mean that we should not work hard or strive to improve ourselves. While material things are necessary for survival and comfort, the key is knowing when one has enough. There are many with immense fortunes who are unhappy because they think they still do not have enough wealth. The wise realize that the constant desire to fulfil material cravings is like drinking salt water to satisfy thirst, and this inevitably leads to dissatisfaction, frustration and suffering. To have found our own level of contentment is to have found true peace of mind. Contentment is the greatest wealth.

25. To be grateful

It is said that in this world, there are few who will go out of their way to help another. Even fewer still are those who are grateful for the help given to them. Gratitude is usually accompanied by thanks and appreciation, and also by the desire to return any favours done. All this leads to reciprocal kindness and goodwill, and brings even more blessings in the future too.

26. To hear the Dhamma at the right time

Any time is the right time to read or listen to the Dhamma. However, a good time would be when we are troubled, upset or in doubt. This brings calm, assurance and confidence when we need it the most. Not everyone has the opportunity or the means to be able to hear and learn the Dhamma. We should try to always be in touch with it and not let this great blessing go to waste.

27. To have patience

It is said that patience is the highest virtue, and it is certainly one of the most difficult qualities to attain. We will always be subject to changing conditions and the vagaries of the people around us. Most of these things are beyond our control and if we allow ourselves to be overly affected by them, we will suffer unnecessary stress, unhappiness and anger. We also need to be patient with ourselves when we make mistakes or slip back on the spiritual path, and to keep on trying our best. Patience is a great blessing as it leads to forbearance, forgiveness and tolerance. It allows us to be calm and serene, and to maintain a cool head and a clear mind in any situation.

28. To listen to advice

Many people find it very difficult to listen to advice, much less accept criticism or have their faults and mistakes pointed out to them. However, we cannot acquire deeper knowledge and make true progress if pride and stubbornness stand in our way. Openness, acceptance and humility when corrected are necessary because we are not perfect and always have more to learn from others.

29. To associate with monks and spiritual teachers

Meeting such people gives us the opportunity to learn from them and to derive encouragement and inspiration from their wisdom and serenity. It also reminds us that there is more to this world than just the sensual and material, and shows us that there are many who are already well on the spiritual path.

Being with such people should motivate us to practice the Four Brahmaviharas, also known as the Four Heavenly Abodes because cultivating these noble qualities will bring our minds to a spiritual and heavenly state.

The Four Brahmaviharas

1. Loving-kindness
2. Compassion
3. Sympathetic joy
4. Equanimity

30. To discuss and talk about the Dhamma

To further support the blessing of hearing and learning the Dhamma is to discuss and talk about it. By doing so, we have the blessing of associating with spiritual friends who are on the same path as ourselves. We also have the opportunity to share what we have learned with others and continue to increase our knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's teachings. In this way, we are frequently in touch with the Dhamma and this is the factor that leads directly to the Supreme Blessings.

5. The Supreme Blessings

- 31. To practice self-restraint
- 32. To live according to the Noble Eight-Fold Path
- 33. To understand the Four Noble Truths
- 34. To attain Nibbana
- 35. To be unaffected by worldly conditions
- 36. To be free from sorrow
- 37. To be free from defilements
- 38. To have lasting peace and security



At this stage, material development is no longer of priority. The objectives of life have changed. This is the level of serious spiritual practice directed at attaining the Supreme Blessings of the Path, and Fruits of the Path, to Nibbana.

The Path to Nibbana

31. To practice self-restraint

We have now entered the highest stage where a greater effort is needed for further progress. We should no longer be easily swayed by sensual desires or physical discomforts. We must train ourselves to remain focused on the path. The most basic way is by the strict observance of the Five Precepts, or better still by observing the Eight Precepts. For many practicing Buddhists, it is a tradition to observe the Eight Precepts on new and full moon days, but they can be observed on other days as well.

A good way of training ourselves in self-restraint is to attend meditation retreats where we can practice the Eight Precepts over an extended period of time. This also allows us to lead a simple life of voluntary austerity, providing us the mental and bodily discipline to follow closely to the Eight-Fold Path. Meditation, particularly Vipassana or Insight Meditation, also trains us in the best way of self-restraint, which is constant mindfulness.

The Eight Precepts

1. To abstain from killing any living beings.
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual activity.
4. To abstain from lying and false speech.
5. To abstain from the consumption of intoxicants and drugs.
6. To abstain from eating after noon.
7. To abstain from singing, dancing, music, shows, perfume, cosmetics and decorative accessories.
8. To abstain from using high or luxurious seats or beds.

32. To live according to the Noble Eight-Fold Path

At this level of spiritual maturity, this blessing does not simply mean a superficial observance of the Eight-Fold Path. At this level, it means a serious and mindful adherence to each and every factor of the Path. All the previous blessings are the preparations for us to follow this path with determination and diligence. The Eight-Fold Path can be summarized into its three aspects of sila (morality), samadhi (mental development), and panna (wisdom).

The Noble Eight-Fold Path

Morality group

1. Right Speech

To refrain from lying, slander, harsh words and gossip. To cultivate truthful, peaceful, kind and meaningful speech.

2. Right Action

To abstain from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. To cultivate harmlessness, honesty and faithfulness.

3. Right Livelihood

To avoid occupations involving killing (of both humans and animals), the sale of animal flesh, the trading of humans, weapons, poisons and intoxicants. Occupations which are unethical, immoral and illegal should also be avoided.

Mental development group

4. Right Effort

To apply mental discipline to prevent unwholesome thoughts from arising, and to dispel unwholesome thoughts that have arisen. To develop wholesome thoughts, and to maintain those wholesome thoughts that have arisen.

5. Right Mindfulness

To be aware of the body, and bodily postures and sensations. To be aware of the mind and its thoughts, emotions and feelings. To be aware of the Dhamma.

6. Right Concentration

To practice meditation to train the mind to be

focused and disciplined in order to cultivate and acquire wisdom.

Wisdom group

7. Right Understanding

To understand and accept the Four Noble Truths.

8. Right Thought

To cultivate thoughts of generosity, loving-kindness and compassion.

33. To understand the Four Noble Truths

By following the Eight-Fold Path, true understanding of the Four Noble Truths will arise. This is different from academic knowledge based on studies, or understanding coming from mere thinking. It is the deep and experiential realization of the truths of reality and existence, arising from the careful practice of morality, mental development and wisdom.

Each aspect of the Eight-Fold Path supports the cultivation and development of the other aspects. For example, observing morality is the foundation necessary for mental development, which leads to wisdom. Wisdom enables us to see the benefits of morality, which we will be more attentive in observing.

A higher standard of morality allows for a greater level of mental development which results in an even deeper penetration of wisdom. And this cycle of spiritual growth continues as an upward spiral towards true understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the eventual attainment of Nibbana.

The Four Noble Truths

1. All beings are subject to Dukkha

Dukkha is usually translated as suffering but it actually encompasses a wide range of negative feelings including stress, dissatisfaction and physical suffering. Dukkha exists as all beings are subject to illness, separation from loved ones, not getting their desires, aging and death.

2. Dukkha arises from desire and craving

All beings crave pleasant sensations, and also desire to avoid unpleasant sensations. These sensations can be physical or psychological, and dukkha arises when these desires and cravings are not met.

3. Dukkha can be overcome by the elimination of desire and craving

Nibbana is the state of peace where all greed, hatred and delusion, and thereby dukkha, have been eradicated.

4. There is a way out of dukkha, which is the Noble Eightfold Path

Dukkha can be reduced, weakened and finally eradicated and Nibbana thereby attained, by following this path as taught by the Buddha.

34. To attain Nibbana

All of us are capable of attaining Nibbana. We may not get enlightened straight away but it is possible for us to attain a level from which Nibbana is assured. Enlightenment is not necessarily realized suddenly or completely. For most people, it will come in gradual stages.

There are four stages leading to enlightenment which are Stream-Entering, Once-Returning, Non-Returning and Full Enlightenment. Anyone who has attained the first three stages can advance to higher stages depending on their practice. To attain full enlightenment, ten fetters or obstructions, must be overcome.

The Ten Fetters

1. Belief that nothing survives the body after death, at one extreme. Or belief in a permanent unchanging entity (immortal soul) that survives after death, at the other extreme. *
2. Sceptical or irrational doubts regarding the teachings of the Buddha, in particular the teachings on kamma and rebirth.
3. Belief that one can be purified through sacrifices, rituals or ceremonies.
4. Attachment to sense pleasures.
5. Anger and ill-will.
6. Desiring existence in a fine-material realm (a heavenly existence).
7. Desiring existence in a formless realm (an even more refined heavenly existence).
8. Conceit and pride.
9. Restlessness and discontent.
10. Ignorance and delusion.

* This should not be confused with the delusion of self which is completely overcome only by Arahants when they attain full enlightenment.

Stream-Enterers are those who have at most seven more lifetimes to go before attaining full enlightenment. They have 'entered the stream' to Nibbana. During their remaining lives, they will be reborn only in the human or a heavenly realm, and never in a lower realm. Stream-Enterers have eradicated the first three fetters. However, they still have a long way to go as they have yet to weaken the next two fetters (4 & 5) or fully eradicate all the remaining fetters.

A characteristic of Stream-Enterers is that they observe the Five Precepts strictly but easily, and are extremely averse to committing harmful actions of any kind. Their other characteristic is an unshakeable confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the (noble) Sangha. These characteristics may have arisen naturally, possibly carried over from a past life, or developed in the present life through the serious practice of the Eight-Fold Path.

Once-Returners will have only one more life in the human or a heavenly realm before attaining full enlightenment. They have eradicated the first three fetters and weakened, but not yet completely eradicated the next two (4 & 5). Non-Returners will have a final life in a very high and refined heavenly realm and will gain full enlightenment in that realm. They have eradicated the first five fetters. Arahants have successfully eradicated all ten fetters and have become fully enlightened. They have freed themselves from rebirth and attained Nibbana.

• All of us should strive hard to become at least Stream-

Enterers. It is well within the reach of all sincere Buddhists, whether they are monks, nuns or lay people, who accept and have confidence in the Dhamma and live according to the Eight-Fold Path. With commitment and sincerity, it is very much achievable in the present life. Attaining Nibbana then becomes just a matter of time.

The Fruits of the Path

The following are the Fruits of the Path, or the Supreme Blessings attained by the enlightened. While we may not yet be able to achieve all the following blessings in full, we will be able to at least experience and taste these Fruits of the Path to Nibbana. Having had even a small taste of Nibbana will encourage us to strive on.

35. To be unaffected by worldly conditions

There will always be changes in our lives, some which cause happiness while others bring sadness. It is the nature of existence that change is always taking place and the changes relating to our lives are always fluctuating between extremes. Realizing the ever-changing nature of our existence and practicing equanimity enables one to be unaffected by these worldly conditions.

The Eight Worldly Conditions

Gain and loss

Honour and disgrace

Praise and blame

Pleasure and pain

36. To be free from sorrow

Sorrow, distress, grief and worry are part of our lives and stem from clinging and attachment to the things we desire and love. The enlightened realize the truth of impermanence that whatever arises must also one day cease to exist. By facing this truth directly and understanding it, one will be free from sorrow.

37. To be free from defilements

The defilements of greed, hatred and delusion are the root causes of all suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Even the most subtle aspects of the defilements should be eradicated. These subtle aspects include desire and clinging, aversion and irritation, and disinterest and ignorance. The enlightened are totally free from all of these defilements.

38. To have lasting peace and security

Unlike the ever-changing and unsatisfactory nature of our mundane existence, the peace and happiness of Nibbana is permanent. Even the slightest taste of Nibbana can never be lost. Thus to have attained Nibbana is to have attained the ultimate blessing of perfect peace and absolute security.

In Summary :

For those who abide by this teaching,
They will have established complete safety,
And attained unending happiness wherever they are.
These are the 38 Highest Blessings.

By cultivating these 38 Blessings, we can all enjoy A Life of Blessings!

It is said that at the end of the Buddha's teaching on
the Mangala Sutta, a great number of beings
attained the Fruits of Stream-Entry,
Once-Returning and Non-Returning.



References

- A Discourse on the Ariyavasa Sutta – Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw
An Exposition of the Mangala Sutta – Bikkhu Pesala
Liberation - Relevance of Sutta-Vinaya –
Ven. Dhammavuddho Thera
Life's Highest Blessings – Dr. R.L. Soni
Mangala Sutta – Ven. K. Gunaratana
Mangala Sutta – Narada Thera
Mangala Sutta – Piya Tan
Mangala Sutta – Thanissaro Bikkhu
Mangala Sutta – Ven. Sayadaw Ashin Nyanissara
Mangala Sutta Vanana – Ven. K. Gunaratana
The 38 Blessings – Ven. U Nanadicca Maha Thera
The 38 Supreme Blessings – Punnadhammo Bikkhu
The Workings of Kamma – Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw
These are the Highest Blessings – Kathryn Guta





C onclusion

The Buddha recognized that not everyone is ready, or even suited for a life centred on intensive spiritual practice. Most are content with being part of a household, running their businesses, taking part in social activities and having a good time. He said that there is nothing wrong with people enjoying their families, their material possessions and taking pleasure in life.

However, he stressed that the pursuit of our own happiness should not be at the expense of others. Such happiness will be short-lived and lead ultimately to our own suffering. By helping and bringing happiness unconditionally to others, our own happiness will not only be preserved, but maintained for a long time to come.

Anyone can see that many of the teachings in this book are just plain common-sense. Unfortunately not all of us apply this common-sense to our daily lives! The teachings here point out and remind us of how we should lead our lives, for our own well-being, and also for the well-being of our society.

Carefully considering and following these teachings virtually guarantees peace and happiness for ourselves, our family and our community. This creates the conditions for even more peace and happiness in this present life, and for

many future lives too. And for those who sincerely and diligently practice these teachings, attaining the ultimate blessing of Nibbana is only a matter of time.

Give the Buddha's teachings a try. Make an effort and experience the results for yourself. And if the teachings work for you, share them with your friends and family for their own benefit too.

The Buddha has shown the way.

We just need to walk the Path!



Letters from around the World

This booklet is dedicated to all those who had written these wonderfully inspiring and heart-warming letters to my website and who are spreading the Dhamma wherever they are. Apologies to the many people whose letters are not included here. My gratitude and thanks are extended to all.

I want to let you know how much I appreciate your kind gift. I have been reading Buddhist books for some years but have never read such a clear explanation as contained in the wonderful little 'Just Be Good' book that you have written. I have been reading the material every day and as a result I am convinced of the path that I will follow. I will refer to your site often to gain deeper insight but will always return to your basic introduction which I found inspirational. You have affected my life in a profound way and I send you my kindest regards. Thank you.

Kevin Sheldon

Tasmania, Australia

You have reached out and helped so many hungry people, including me. I am certain, were it not for you, I would not have become a student of the Dhamma. I will try to live by the Buddha's teachings.

John Chisholm

Illinois, USA

What a revelation! - Just Be Good. Wow! Its so much easier to love and forgive people than to hold grudges and hate. Is this enlightenment? I don't know but it feels so good! What a special person the Buddha was. The law of kamma is so just, and life becomes wonderful again. Regards and thanks,

Peter Power

Dorset, United Kingdom

Thank you so much for the materials. They have been so very helpful to me. They have changed my life.

Melanie Adams

Pennsylvania, USA

Excellent website for anyone looking for answers. You have demystified religion and shown how Buddhist teachings can offer hope to one and all. Thank you so much.

Ajith

Singapore

Thank you for helping me find some peace in my heart and in my mind. This information has changed my life, no amount of words could ever express that happiness.

Stacey

Florida, USA

I would like to thank you for for spending the time to take what you believe and share it among others. Your website is a powerful resource for novice Buddhists.

Emily

Texas, USA

I have just got around to reading the free 'Just Be Good' book you sent me - fabulous!! I am currently re-reading it because it is so condensed and I'll need to read it several times to really "get it". It is full of so much valuable information, like your website and advice. Keep up the great work you are doing. You're a blessing to this world.

Kirsten McLauchlan

Brisbane, Australia

Thank you so very very much for all the good, beautiful, informative, uplifting, etc. Buddhist literature, CD's, bumper stickers. We are very happy to place this literature in our Hospital Spirituality Room. It is of great help to many of our patients. May you and yours be deeply blessed for all the good work you continue to do. Thank You!

Michael Melcher

Pennsylvania, USA

I just want to let you know that I read your 'Just Be Good' book and it is fantastic! Simple, thorough, beautiful. I gave a copy to my co-worker and she's enthralled to learn more. Once again, kudos to you! Take care!

Becki

Salem, USA

I would just like to say Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! I have appreciatively received the free literature that you sent to me. I am using these resources to educate and spread the word of Buddha. Once again, thank you.

Kristie Townsend

Leicester, England

I just received the package you sent me. Thank you so, so much. I can't wait to start reading and listening to the materials. I am also looking forward to sharing it with several friends of mine. Thank you also for offering a very enlightening and informative website to us struggling but very happy to learn and apply Buddhism in our daily lives.

Shalimar

Manila, Philippines

I have been to your website a lot over the last few months reading and using the links. I also received your package today and thank you kindly. I really feel as if I have found the spiritual source I have been searching for. I would like to thank you for your web site and materials. If not for you and your words I may not have found the right path. I will read everything you sent me and I believe I am ready to seek out a teacher. Thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

Joseph

USA

I was born a Christian and been a Christian for so many years but I started changing myself to Buddhism. I found this website which is very interesting and there is a lot more to study. "Anyone can go to Heaven, Just be Good" is a great teaching for me. Thank you to the person or team who is handling this website.

Shiroma Wijesekera

Sri Lanka

I want to thank you for sending me the books I requested on Buddhism. I have never read anything about it till now, and all that I have learned from this material has made me look at things in a significantly different way. I feel that what I sensed on a gut level has now been revealed by a deeply wise man 2,500 years ago. I will keep his teachings close to my heart. Thank you all.

Angela Wilkins

Lancashire, England

Thank you. Your website is awesome. I was introduced to your website while I attended a seminar on Buddhism in Bangkok at the World Fellowship of Buddhism. My grandmother was a life long Buddhist. She was the most peaceful and kind person I have ever known. Now I know why she was so peaceful, kind and wise.

Yong Park

California, USA

Thank you very much for the free stuff you have sent me. I am going to tell all my friends about your website and I will do my bit to spread the message of Buddha as much as I can. I lost my father six years back. I have managed to carry on because of the teachings of Buddha. I wish I had discovered your website earlier. But nevertheless thank you once again. It is because of people like you that the world is still going strong.

Jashoda Chhetri

Gangtok, Sikkim, India

Thank you so very much for the free materials. As someone who is just beginning to follow the teachings of Buddha, it is wonderful to have such concise and simple information. Please continue to do your work, it is much needed in these troubling times.

Chris Haynie

Alabama, USA

I was SO happy to receive your small parcel with huge ideas last Friday. It perked up my weary spirit, or 'mind continuum' more than you know. Thank you so much for the gift, and your website, and the links to other sites regarding Buddhism, a belief system that has SO MUCH integrity, compassion, and tolerance. May The Powers That Be regard all of you at justbegood.net with GREAT FAVOUR for the work that you do. Gratefully,

Sharon Fummerton

Penticton, B.C., Canada

Thank you for sending me the books and most especially your 'Just be Good' book. I like the feel of your work as it is easily accessible and not like some religious works can be: a tome without meaning. I hope that this is not the last work you will do and I hope to see many more like it in the future. Keep up the good work and thank you for all you do.

Lee Smith,

England

I'm a Buddhist in my twilight years and with no transport of my own, its so wonderful to learn of your website when a friend took me to a temple and I got your new copy of 'Just Be Good'. Its great to know that Mr. Lee has done so much to spread the Dhamma so people all over the world have easy access to know more about Buddhism. Each night before I go to bed I will read through the little booklet 'Just Be Good' as a reminder to practise the Precepts and be at peace myself. Blessings to all those who created the website and keep up the good work.
SADHU SADHU SADHU

S.W. Tan

Malaysia

This site is so eye opening, and informative. Thanks you all. Your good and kind work on this site has enabled me and many others to set out on the path to seek enlightenment.

Namaste, and heartfelt gratitude.

Rosary Selensky

New York, USA

I received the booklets and CDs on Friday and have been going through them. They are excellent!!! I have also been exploring your website almost daily and am amazed at the amount of info. you have provided for those of us just discovering Buddhism. Again, thank you so much.
All the best,

David Hartman

Reno, USA

First I want to thank you for the Buddhist information I requested. Can you please send me a few more of the 'Just Be Good' booklet as I only requested one. I enjoyed this little book so much that I cannot part with it but would like to share this information with my children and my friends. Thank you so much.

Diana Standfill

Washington, USA

I have looked at Buddhism from all directions but as I think I've said before, in England the authors of even the simplest guides, seem to baffle and confuse you, with various must-not do's! Then I found your great website and haven't looked back. It's how it should be, simple and honest. I hope we can develop a lasting friendship as you have given me so much help and encouragement. A hundred blessings and may you always have peace.

Colin Mitchell

Cambridgeshire, England

I have just received your wonderful 'Just Be Good' book and all I can say is WOW!! So much knowledge in such a small package. Thank you so much for sharing with anyone who wants learn. May the wisdom of the Buddhas continue to shower you. Much Metta,

Tommie

Florida, USA

I would like to congratulate you on a wonderful and beautiful site. Becoming a Buddhist for me is like coming home, I feel that I have been practicing Buddhism all my life. I have just finished reading the 'Just be Good' booklet and it is very informative yet easy to understand. I am going to order some more to give to my friends.

Thank you.

Martyn

Sheffield, United Kingdom

Thank you for the free information!!! Your material is written in a way anyone can grasp its meaning. I have been looking at other Buddhist sites but really couldn't understand even the basics as I'm a slow learner. Now with the understanding your booklets and CD's have given me, I am understanding deeper teachings also. I wish I had found you a long time ago. I am now at peace with myself and enjoying life. I only want for others to be as happy and at peace, so I will work towards that thanks to your site... Namaste...

Tanja L James

Idaho, USA

Thank you for the 'Just Be Good' booklets. Wonderful! It'll be so nice for a 'novice Buddhist' to carry one around as a reminder and source of information.

Helena

Finland

Firstly, a big thank you to you. I can't express what a wonderful job you're doing. You make happiness in life accessible to everyone through your free material - people who can afford to be well informed, and people who can't. Like most people, I've also come through some rocky times, but I am so happy to have the support of Buddhism and learning about Buddhism. Previously, I searched through websites, books, etc. and they often took a lot of time and understanding. Yet the way your books are written are so simple, I can read them after a day's work and it doesn't feel like a chore that's going to drain me! I can read them anywhere, the train, the bus, wherever, because of the simple yet informative way they're written. You've done a really good job and you're changing people's lives! I hope you know that!

Pavan Amara

London, England

Your generous gifts arrived today and I am most excited that you added some extra copies of your 'Just be Good' booklet. I have generated some amount of interest in Buddhism and I will have these materials given away very quickly. I find that even fundamental Christians are easily excited by the idea of taking control of their own thoughts. It seems at first a very foreign idea that this is possible. For all that our society values and teaches, most people consider being a victim of their own thoughts an unfortunate fact of life. I think that your idea of justbegood.net and your execution thereof, are going to be a powerful force in moving forward the consciousness of society. It is my intention to be an active part of this movement. Thank you again!

George Larson

Pennsylvania, USA



A ppendix 1

Sigalovada Sutta **The Discourse to Sigala** **The Layperson's Code of Discipline**

Translated from the Pali by

Narada Thera

(Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985)

Thus have I heard :

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near Rajagaha.

Now at that time, young Sigala, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith.

Then the Exalted One, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered Rajagaha for alms. Now he saw young Sigala worshipping thus and spoke to him as follows:

"Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and

wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?"

"My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honouring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters."

"It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"How then, Lord, should the six quarters be worshipped in the discipline of the noble? It is well, Lord, if the Exalted One would teach the doctrine to me showing how the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"Well, young householder, listen and bear it well in mind; I shall speak." — "Very good, Lord," responded young Sigala.

And the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple (1) has eradicated the four vices in conduct, [1] (2) inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, (3) inasmuch as he pursues not the six channels for dissipating wealth, he

thus, avoiding these fourteen evil things, covers the six quarters, and enters the path leading to victory in both worlds: he is favoured in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

(1) What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life, householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"Killing, stealing, lying and adultery,
These four evils the wise never praise.

(2) In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil. [2]

But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"Whoever through desire, hate or fear,
Or ignorance should transgress the Dhamma,

All his glory fades away
Like the moon during the waning half.
Whoever through desire, hate or fear,
Or ignorance never transgresses the Dhamma,
All his glory ever increases
Like the moon during the waxing half.

(3) What are the six channels for dissipating wealth which he does not pursue?

- (a) indulgence in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness;
- (b) sauntering in streets at unseemly hours;
- (c) frequenting theatrical shows;
- (d) indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness;
- (e) association with evil companions;
- (f) the habit of idleness.

(a) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness:

- i. loss of wealth,
- ii. increase of quarrels,
- iii. susceptibility to disease,
- iv. earning an evil reputation,
- v. shameless exposure of body,
- vi. weakening of intellect.

(b) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours:

- i. he himself is unprotected and unguarded,
- ii. his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded,
- iii. his property is unprotected and unguarded,
- iv. he is suspected of evil deeds, [3]
- v. he is subject to false rumours,
- vi. he meets with many troubles.

(c) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in frequenting theatrical shows. He is ever thinking:

- i. where is there dancing?
- ii. where is there singing?
- iii. where is there music?
- iv. where is there recitation?
- v. where is there playing with cymbals?
- vi. where is there pot-blowing? [4]

(d) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling:

- i. the winner begets hate,
- ii. the loser grieves for lost wealth,
- iii. loss of wealth,
- iv. his word is not relied upon in a court of law,
- v. he is despised by his friends and associates,
- vi. he is not sought after for matrimony; for people would say he is a gambler and is not fit to look after a wife.

(e) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in associating with evil companions, namely: any gambler, any libertine, any drunkard, any swindler, any cheat, any rowdy is his friend and companion.

(f) There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness. He does no work, saying:

- i. that it is extremely cold,
- ii. that it is extremely hot,
- iii. that it is too late in the evening,
- iv. that it is too early in the morning,
- v. that he is extremely hungry,
- vi. that he is too full.

Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"One is a bottle friend; one says, 'friend, friend' only to one's face; one is a friend and an associate only when it is advantageous.

Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irascibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice — these six causes ruin a man.

The man who has evil comrades and friends is given to evil ways, to ruin does he fall in both worlds — here and the next.

Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice — these nine [5] causes ruin a man.

Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes to women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders — he declines just as the moon during the waning half.

Who is drunk, poor, destitute, still thirsty whilst drinking, frequents the bars, sinks in debt as a stone in water, swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is ever intoxicated, and is licentious, is not fit to lead a household life.

Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late, and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness."

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

(1) he who appropriates a friend's possessions,

- (2) he who renders lip-service,
- (3) he who flatters,
- (4) he who brings ruin.

(1) In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- i. he appropriates his friend's wealth,
- ii. he gives little and asks much,
- iii. he does his duty out of fear,
- iv. he associates for his own advantage.

(2) In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- i. he makes friendly profession as regards the past,
- ii. he makes friendly profession as regards the future,
- iii. he tries to gain one's favour by empty words,
- iv. when opportunity for service has arisen, he expresses his inability.

(3) In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- i. he approves of his friend's evil deeds,
- ii. he disapproves his friend's good deeds,
- iii. he praises him in his presence,
- iv. he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- i. he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness,
- ii. he is a companion in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours,
- iii. he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows,
- iv. he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The friend who appropriates,
the friend who renders lip-service,
the friend that flatters,
the friend who brings ruin,
these four as enemies the wise behold,
avoid them from afar as paths of peril.

These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

- (1) he who is a helpmate,
- (2) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow,
- (3) he who gives good counsel,
- (4) he who sympathises.

(1) In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be

understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- i. he guards the heedless,
- ii. he protects the wealth of the heedless,
- iii. he becomes a refuge when you are in danger,
- iv. when there are commitments he provides you with double the supply needed.

(2) In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- i. he reveals his secrets,
- ii. he conceals one's own secrets,
- iii. in misfortune he does not forsake one,
- iv. his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- i. he restrains one from doing evil,
- ii. he encourages one to do good,
- iii. he informs one of what is unknown to oneself,
- iv. he points out the path to heaven.

(4) In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathises be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- i. he does not rejoice in one's misfortune,
- ii. he rejoices in one's prosperity,

- iii. he restrains others speaking ill of oneself,
- iv. he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The friend who is a helpmate,
the friend in happiness and woe,
the friend who gives good counsel,
the friend who sympathises too —
these four as friends the wise behold
and cherish them devotedly
as does a mother her own child.

The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire.
He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways
like to a bee that honey gathers, [6]
riches mount up for him
like ant hill's rapid growth.

With wealth acquired this way,
a layman fit for household life,
in portions four divides his wealth:
thus will he friendship win.

One portion for his wants he uses, [7]
two portions on his business spends,
the fourth for times of need he keeps."

"And how, young householder, does a noble disciple cover the six quarters?

The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and brahmins as the Zenith. [8]

In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the **East**:

- i. Having supported me I shall support them,
- ii. I shall do their duties,
- iii. I shall keep the family tradition,
- iv. I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance,
- v. furthermore I shall offer alms in honour of my departed relatives. [9]

In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the **East** by their children, show their compassion:

- i. they restrain them from evil,
- ii. they encourage them to do good,
- iii. they train them for a profession,
- iv. they arrange a suitable marriage,
- v. at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

In these five ways do children minister to their parents as the **East** and the parents show their compassion to their children. Thus is the **East** covered by them and made safe and secure.

In five ways, young householder, a pupil should minister to a teacher as the **South**:

- i. by rising from the seat in salutation,
- ii. by attending on him,
- iii. by eagerness to learn,
- iv. by personal service,
- v. by respectful attention while receiving instructions.

In five ways, young householder, do teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion:

- i. they train them in the best discipline,
- ii. they see that they grasp their lessons well,
- iii. they instruct them in the arts and sciences,
- iv. they introduce them to their friends and associates,
- v. they provide for their safety in every quarter.

The teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion towards them in these five ways. Thus is the **South** covered by them and made safe and secure.

In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the **West** be ministered to by a husband:

- i. by being courteous to her,
- ii. by not despising her,
- iii. by being faithful to her,
- iv. by handing over authority to her,
- v. by providing her with adornments.

The wife thus ministered to as the **West** by her husband shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:

- i. she performs her duties well,
- ii. she is hospitable to relations and attendants [10]
- iii. she is faithful,
- iv. she protects what he brings,
- v. she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

In these five ways does the wife show her compassion to her husband who ministers to her as the **West**. Thus is the **West** covered by him and made safe and secure.

In five ways, young householder, should a clansman minister to his friends and associates as the **North**:

- i. by liberality,
- ii. by courteous speech,
- iii. by being helpful,
- iv. by being impartial,
- v. by sincerity.

The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by a clansman show compassion to him in five ways:

- i. they protect him when he is heedless,
- ii. they protect his property when he is heedless,
- iii. they become a refuge when he is in danger,
- iv. they do not forsake him in his troubles,
- v. they show consideration for his family.

The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by a clansman show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **North** covered by him and made safe and secure.

In five ways should a master minister to his servants and employees as the **Nadir**:

- i. by assigning them work according to their ability,
- ii. by supplying them with food and with wages,
- iii. by tending them in sickness,
- iv. by sharing with them any delicacies,
- v. by granting them leave at times.

The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** by their master show their compassion to him in five ways:

- i. they rise before him,
- ii. they go to sleep after him,
- iii. they take only what is given,
- iv. they perform their duties well,
- v. they uphold his good name and fame.

The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **Nadir** covered by him and made safe and secure.

In five ways, young householder, should a householder

minister to ascetics and brahmins as the **Zenith**:

- i. by lovable deeds,
- ii. by lovable words,
- iii. by lovable thoughts,
- iv. by keeping open house to them,
- v. by supplying their material needs.

The ascetics and brahmins thus ministered to as the **Zenith** by a householder show their compassion towards him in six ways:

- i. they restrain him from evil,
- ii. they persuade him to do good,
- iii. they love him with a kind heart,
- iv. they make him hear what he has not heard,
- v. they clarify what he has already heard,
- vi. they point out the path to a heavenly state.

In these six ways do ascetics and brahmins show their compassion towards a householder who ministers to them as the **Zenith**. Thus is the **Zenith** covered by him and made safe and secure."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The mother and father are the East,
The Teachers are the South,
Wife and Children are the West,
The friends and associates are the North.

Servants and employees are the Nadir,
The ascetics and brahmins are the Zenith;
Who is fit to lead the household life,
These six quarters he should salute.

Who is wise and virtuous,
Gentle and keen-witted,
Humble and amenable,
Such a one to honour may attain.

Who is energetic and not indolent,
In misfortune unshaken,
Flawless in manner and intelligent,
Such a one to honour may attain.

Who is hospitable, and friendly,
Liberal and unselfish,
A guide, an instructor, a leader,
Such a one to honour may attain.

Generosity, sweet speech,
Helpfulness to others,
Impartiality to all,
As the case demands.

These four winning ways make the world go round,
As the linchpin in a moving car.
If these in the world exist not,
Neither mother nor father will receive,
Respect and honour from their children.

Since these four winning ways
The wise appraise in every way,
To eminence they attain,
And praise they rightly gain."

When the Exalted One had spoken thus, Sigala, the young householder, said as follows:

"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that those who have eyes may see. Even so, has the doctrine been explained in various ways by the Exalted One.

I take refuge, Lord, in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Exalted One receive me as a lay follower; as one who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end."

Digha Nikaya, No. 31

NOTES

- [1] kamma-kilesa, lit., 'actions of defilement.'
- [2] These are the four agati, 'evil courses of action':
chanda, dosa, moha, bhaya.
- [3] Crimes committed by others.
- [4] A kind of amusement.
- [5] The Pali original has here "six causes" as two

compound words and one double-term phrase are counted as units.

- [6] Dhammapada v. 49: "As a bee, without harming the flower, its colour or scent, flies away, collecting only the honey..."
- [7] This portion includes what is spent on good works: gifts to monks, charity, etc.
- [8] "The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents' care; teacher's fees and the South are the same word: dakkhina; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is 'beyond' (uttara), so by help of friends, etc., he gets beyond troubles." — (Rhys Davids)
- [9] This is a sacred custom of the Aryans who never forgot the dead. This tradition is still faithfully observed by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka who make ceremonial offerings of alms to the monks on the eighth day, in the third month, and on each anniversary of the demise of the parents. Merit of these good actions is offered to the departed after such ceremony. Moreover after every punna-kamma (good action), a Buddhist never fails to think of his parents and offer merit. Such is the loyalty and the gratitude shown to parents as advised by the Buddha.
- [10] lit., 'the folk around' (parijana).

A ppendix 2

Vyagghapajja Sutta (Dighajanu Sutta)

Conditions of Welfare

Translated from the Pali by

Narada Thera

(Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985)



Translator's note: In this sutta, the Buddha instructs rich householders how to preserve and increase their prosperity and how to avoid loss of wealth. Wealth alone, however, does not make a complete man nor a harmonious society. Possession of wealth all too often multiplies man's desires, and he is ever in the pursuit of amassing more wealth and power. This unrestrained craving, however, leaves him dissatisfied and stifles his inner growth. It creates conflict and disharmony in society through the resentment of the underprivileged who feel themselves exploited by the effects of unrestrained craving.

Therefore the Buddha follows up on his advice on material welfare with four essential conditions for spiritual welfare:

confidence (in the Master's enlightenment), virtue, liberality and wisdom. These four will instill in man a sense of higher values. He will then not only pursue his own material concern, but also be aware of his duty towards society. To mention only one of the implications: a wisely and generously employed liberality will reduce tensions and conflicts in society. Thus the observing of these conditions of material and spiritual welfare will make for an ideal citizen in an ideal society.



Thus have I heard :

Once the Exalted One was dwelling amongst the Koliyans,[1] in their market town named Kakkrapatta. Then Dighajanu,[2] a Koliyan, approached the Exalted One, respectfully saluted Him and sat on one side. Thus seated, he addressed the Exalted One as follows:

"We, Lord, are laymen who enjoy worldly pleasure. We lead a life encumbered by wife and children. We use sandalwood of Kasi. We deck ourselves with garlands, perfume and unguents. We use gold and silver. To those like us, O Lord, let the Exalted One preach the Dhamma, teach those things that lead to weal and happiness in this life and to weal and happiness in future life."

Conditions of Worldly Progress

"Four conditions, Vyagghapajja,[3] conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in this very life. Which four?

"The accomplishment of persistent effort (utthana-sampada), the accomplishment of watchfulness (arakkha-sampada), good friendship (kalyanamittata) and balanced livelihood (sama-jvivikata).

"What is the accomplishment of persistent effort?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, by whatsoever activity a householder earns his living, whether by farming, by trading, by rearing cattle, by archery, by service under the king, or by any other kind of craft -- at that he becomes skillful and is not lazy. He is endowed with the power of discernment as to the proper ways and means; he is able to carry out and allocate (duties). This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

"What is the accomplishment of watchfulness?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, whatsoever wealth a householder is in possession of, obtained by dint of effort, collected by strength of arm, by the sweat of his brow, justly acquired by right means -- such he husbands well by guarding and watching so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not carry

it away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove it. This is the accomplishment of watchfulness.

"What is good friendship?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, in whatsoever village or market town a householder dwells, he associates, converses, engages in discussions with householders or householders' sons, whether young and highly cultured or old and highly cultured, full of faith (saddha), [4] full of virtue (sila), full of charity (caga), full of wisdom (pañña). He acts in accordance with the faith of the faithful, with the virtue of the virtuous, with the charity of the charitable, with the wisdom of the wise. This is called good friendship.

"What is balanced livelihood?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

"Just as the goldsmith, [5] or an apprentice of his, knows, on holding up a balance, that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up; even so a householder, knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

"If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with little income were to lead an extravagant life, there would be those who say -- 'This person enjoys his property like one who eats wood-apple. '[6] If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with a large income were to lead a wretched life, there would be those who say -- 'This person will die like a starveling.'

"The wealth thus amassed, Vyagghapajja, has four sources of destruction:

"(i) Debauchery, (ii) drunkenness, (iii) gambling, (iv) friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

"Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and outlets, if a man should close the inlets and open the outlets and there should be no adequate rainfall, decrease of water is to be expected in that tank, and not an increase; even so there are four sources for the destruction of amassed wealth -- debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

"There are four sources for the increase of amassed wealth: (i) abstinence from debauchery, (ii) abstinence from drunkenness, (iii) non-indulgence in gambling, (iv) friendship, companionship and intimacy with the good.

"Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and four outlets, if a person were to open the inlets and close the outlets, and there should also be adequate rainfall, an

increase in water is certainly to be expected in that tank and not a decrease, even so these four conditions are the sources of increase of amassed wealth.

"These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, are conducive to a householder's weal and happiness in this very life.

Conditions of Spiritual Progress

"Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in his future life. Which four?

"The accomplishment of faith (saddha-sampada), the accomplishment of virtue (sila-sampada), the accomplishment of charity (caga-sampada) and the accomplishment of wisdom (pañña-sampada).

"What is the accomplishment of faith?

"Herein a householder is possessed of faith, he believes in the Enlightenment of the Perfect One (Tathagata): Thus, indeed, is that Blessed One: he is the pure one, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well-gone, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, all-knowing and blessed. This is called the accomplishment of faith.

"What is the accomplishment of virtue?

"Herein a householder abstains from killing, stealing, sexual

misconduct, lying, and from intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness. This is called the accomplishment of virtue.

"What is the accomplishment of charity?

"Herein a householder dwells at home with heart free from the stain of avarice, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in generosity, attending to the needy, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called the accomplishment of charity.

"What is the accomplishment of wisdom?

"Herein a householder is wise: he is endowed with wisdom that understands the arising and cessation (of the five aggregates of existence); he is possessed of the noble penetrating insight that leads to the destruction of suffering. This is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

"These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in his future life."

Energetic and heedful in his tasks,
Wisely administering his wealth,
He lives a balanced life,
Protecting what he has amassed.

Endowed with faith and virtue too,
Generous he is and free from avarice;

He ever works to clear the path
That leads to weal in future life.

Thus to the layman full of faith,
By him, so truly named 'Enlightened,'
These eight conditions have been told
Which now and after lead to bliss.

Anguttara Nikaya VIII.54

Notes

- [1] The Koliyans were the rivals of the Sakyans. Queen Maha Maya belonged to the Koliyan clan and King Suddhodana to the Sakyan clan.
- [2] Literally, 'long-kneed'.
- [3] 'Tiger's Path'; he was so called because his ancestors were born on a forest path infested with tigers. Vyagghapajja was Dighajanu's family name.
- [4] Saddha is not blind faith. It is confidence based on knowledge.
- [5] Tuladharo, lit., 'carrier of the scales'.
- [6] Udambarakhadaka. The Commentary explains that one who wishes to eat wood-apple shakes the tree, with the result that many fruits fall but only a few are eaten, while a large number are wasted.

Appendix 3

Parabhava Sutta

Downfall

Translated from the Pali by

Narada Thera

(Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985)



Translator's note: While the Mangala Sutta deals with the way of life conducive to progress and happiness, the Parabhava Sutta supplements it by pointing out the causes of downfall. He who allows himself to become tarnished by these blemishes of conduct blocks his own road to worldly, moral and spiritual progress and lowers all that is truly noble and human in man. But he who is heedful of these dangers keeps open the road to all those thirty-eight blessings of which human nature is capable.



Thus have I heard :

Once the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika's monastery, in the Jeta Grove, near Savatthi.



Now when the night was far spent a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted Him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

The Deity:

Having come here with our questions to the Exalted One, we ask thee, O Gotama, about man's decline. Pray, tell us the cause of downfall!

The Buddha:

Easily known is the progressive one, easily known he who declines. He who loves Dhamma progresses; he who is averse to it, declines.

The Deity:

Thus much do we see: this is the first cause of one's downfall. Pray, tell us the second cause.[1]

The Buddha:

The wicked are dear to him, with the virtuous he finds no delight, he prefers the creed of

the wicked -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

Being fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

Though being well-to-do, not to support father and mother who are old and past their youth -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To deceive by falsehood a brahmin or ascetic or any other mendicant -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To have much wealth and ample gold and food, but to enjoy one's luxuries alone -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be proud of birth, of wealth or clan, and to despise one's own kinsmen -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be a rake, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

Not to be contented with one's own wife, and to be seen with harlots and the wives of others -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of a like behaviour -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be of noble birth, with vast ambition and of slender means, and to crave for rulership -- this is a cause of one's downfall.

Knowing well these causes of downfall in the world, the noble sage endowed with insight shares a happy realm.

Sutta Nipata 1.6

Note

- [1] These lines are repeated after each stanza, with the due enumeration.

A ppendix 4

Maha Mangala Sutta

The Discourse on Blessings

Translated from the Pali by

Narada Thera

(Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985)

Thus have I heard : [1]

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika's monastery, in Jeta's Grove, [2] near Savatthi. [3]

Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendor illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side.

Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse :

"Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. [4] Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!"

The Buddha:

"Not to associate with the foolish, [5] but to associate

with the wise; and to honor those who are worthy of honor — this is the greatest blessing.

To reside in a suitable locality, [6] to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course [7] — this is the greatest blessing.

To have much learning, to be skillful in handicraft, [8] well-trained in discipline, [9] and to be of good speech [10] — this is the greatest blessing.

To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing.

To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct, [11] to help one's relatives, and to be blameless in action — this is the greatest blessing.

To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants, [12] and to be steadfast in virtue — this is the greatest blessing.

To be respectful, [13] humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions [14] — this is the greatest blessing.

To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

Self-restraint, [15] a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbana — this is the greatest blessing.

A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune, [16] from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated [17] — this is the greatest blessing.

Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings." [18]

Sutta Nipata 2.4

NOTES (derived mainly from the Commentaries)

[1] This Sutta appears in the Sutta-Nipata (v.258ff) and in the Khuddakapatha. See Maha-mangala Jataka (No. 453). For a detailed explanation see Life's Highest Blessing by Dr. R.L. Soni, WHEEL No. 254/256.

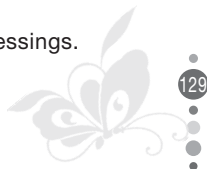
[2] Anathapindika, lit., 'He who gives alms to the helpless'; his former name was Sudatta. After his conversion to Buddhism, he bought the grove belonging to the Prince Jeta, and established a monastery which was subsequently named Jetavana. It was in this monastery that the Buddha observed most of his vassana periods (rainy seasons — the three months' retreat beginning with the full-moon of July). Many are the discourses delivered and many are the incidents connected with the Buddha's life that happened at Jetavana. It was

here that the Buddha ministered to the sick monk neglected by his companions, advising them: "Whoever, monks, would wait upon me, let him wait upon the sick." It was here that the Buddha so poignantly taught the law of impermanence, by asking the bereaved young woman Kisagotami who brought her dead child, to fetch a grain of mustard seed from a home where there has been no bereavement.

- [3] Identified with modern Sahet-Mahet, near Balrampur.
- [4] According to the Commentary, mangala means that which is conducive to happiness and prosperity.
- [5] This refers not only to the stupid and uncultured, but also includes the wicked in thought, word and deed.
- [6] Any place where monks, nuns and lay devotees continually reside; where pious folk are bent on the performance of the ten meritorious deeds, and where the Dhamma exists as a living principle.
- [7] Making the right resolve for abandoning immorality for morality, faithlessness for faith and selfishness for generosity.
- [8] The harmless crafts of the householder by which no living being is injured and nothing unrighteous done; and the crafts of the homeless monk, such as stitching the robes, etc.
- [9] Vinaya means discipline in thought, word and deed. The commentary speaks of two kinds of discipline — that of the householder, which is abstinence from the ten immoral actions (akusala-kammapatha), and that of the monk which is the non-transgression of the offences enumerated in the Patimokkha (the code of

the monk's rules) or the 'fourfold moral purity' (catu-parisuddhi-sila).

- [10] Good speech that is opportune, truthful, friendly, profitable and spoken with thoughts of loving-kindness.
- [11] Righteous conduct is the observance of the ten good actions (kusala-kammapatha) in thought, word and deed: freeing the mind of greed, ill-will and wrong views; avoiding speech that is untruthful, slanderous, abusive and frivolous; and the non-committal acts of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.
- [12] Total abstinence from alcohol and intoxicating drugs.
- [13] Towards monks (and of course also to the clergy of other religions), teachers, parents, elders, superiors, etc.
- [14] For instance, when one is harassed by evil thoughts.
- [15] Self-restraint (tapo): the suppression of lusts and hates by the control of the senses; and the suppression of indolence by the rousing of energy.
- [16] Loka-dhamma, i.e., conditions which are necessarily connected with life in this world; there are primarily eight of them: gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pain and joy.
- [17] Each of these three expressions refers to the mind of the arahant: asoka: sorrowless; viraja: stainless, i.e., free from lust, hatred and ignorance; khema: security from the bonds of sense desires (kama), repeated existence (bhava), false views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja).
- [18] The above-mentioned thirty-eight blessings.



The Gift of the Dhamma is the greatest Gift of all

The significance of sharing the Dhamma

When you share the Dhamma, others will also share the Dhamma with you in your future lives. This is the principle of kamma.

Because the Dhamma can only be shared in the human and heavenly realms, you must be reborn in either of these realms for others to share the Dhamma with you.

Thus, by sharing the Dhamma, you not only give the greatest gift of all, you also help to ensure favourable rebirths for yourself.

More importantly, sharing the Dhamma leads to peace and happiness and eventually to Nibbana, for both the giver and the receiver.

These are the reasons why the gift of the Dhamma is the greatest gift of all.

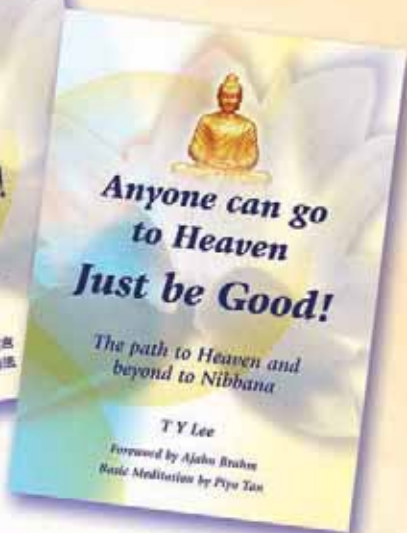
A daily aspiration

May I always do my best to help protect and spread the teachings of the Buddha for the benefit of all beings;

And may I always continue to learn and practice the true Dhamma until I attain Nibbana.

T Y Lee

• More on Buddhism



LOVE US, NOT EAT US !



All Lives Are Precious

www.justbegood.net and www.loveusnoteatus.com

A Life of Blessings

“In this booklet Mr. T.Y. Lee has shown how to gain prosperity and happiness, how to avoid material, moral and spiritual downfall and enlightens people on the blessings in life. Therefore, I highly recommend this booklet as knowledgeable material for a life of blessings in the Buddhist perspective.”

Venerable Dr. I. Indasara Thero, Sri Lanka

“The Buddha addressed the perennial concerns of all human beings - the nature of good and bad, how to be at peace with your neighbor, the meaning of life, and most importantly, how to be a happy and fulfilled individual. The author has selected four discourses by the Buddha that deal with all these issues and has written a commentary on each of them.

The result is a readable, practical and common-sense guide to living the Buddhist life.”

Venerable Shravasti Dhammika, Singapore

“This is “Everyman’s Dhamma”, which stands out for its clarity and simplicity and points to the flexibility and adaptability of Buddhism in the modern era. “A Life of Blessings” highlights the practical simplicity of Buddhism as opposed to the somewhat dogmatic faith characteristic of other religions.

For the spread of the Good Dhamma, I would strongly recommend this booklet for its relevance to the social problems of our time and its applicability to everyday life.”

Venerable Pannyavaro Mahathera, Australia

www.justbegood.net

ISBN 978-981-08-2663-5